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in Mandé. See also S. de Ganay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara /Notes on Bambara theodicy/, pp. 212-213. "In the village of Manin Kaba, there exists what is called the manti blo, 'the vestibule of the Mande,' in which are arranged around the object called pembele twelve seats (sigi yoro) representing the forty-four 'races' of this common hearth."

This origin is well known to the Sudanese, but the number of tribes varies. In the course of the septennial ceremony of Kangaba (see p. 15 note 1) the griot say: "We were forty-eight; through the mixture of the winds, the races came out at the four cardinal points" (an tumbi debe ni seki la, siaw bwora fyẽ nyamile seleke nami).

has the name of Dyéliba and used to be /xiv/ called Toubla. The name of Kaba (1) given by all Sudanese to the ancient capital of Mali

1. The word kaba has its origin in ni ya ka ba ko ye "this is astonishing," an expression currently used concerning the sanctuary and the ritual objects it contains. The Dogon, who claim to originate in Mandé and who have dispersed into the cliffs of Bandiagara from agglomerations to which they had given the name Kani, explain this last term by giving it the meaning of "little Ka." These were, in a sense, relay stations between their original habitat and the one they now occupy. Concerning these migrations, see G. Dieterlen, Les Ames des Dogon /The souls of the Dogon/, pp. 9ff.

actually designates the village of Kangaba. But the oldest agglomerations known, before Dyéliba (Mali I according to J. Vidal), are situated in the regions of Kri Koroni and Ouanda.

796 778 In the village of Kangaba a sanctuary, called mande blo "vestibule of Mande," or kaba blo "vestibule of astonishment," is the object of a septennial ritual attended by representatives of all the races /who are/ said to be of the same origin. There ceremony consists in rebuilding the roof of the sanctuary which shelters an object dolin, but only those persons of pure race belonging to the Kéita family (1) and the traditional griot of the chiefs of Mandé, the Dyabaté, are authorized to perform the ritual. Only they may penetrate the sanctuary and tread on its soil, which is said to be "heavier and more powerful than all things." (2)

551 1. The name of Kéita, for which various etymologies have been found, is that of the founders of the Mandingo empire. Cf. C. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali, p. 31, and L. Tauxier, Histoire des Bambara /Bambara History/, p. 40: "The first kings of Mali lived at Kangaba and were in fact Kéita."

By extension the name of Kéita may be adopted by individuals belonging to one of the tribes originating in Mandé. Thus a Dogon will take on as dyamu Kéita if he comes to live in Mandé. On the other hand, the heraldic device of the Kéita, which relates the high deeds of the Mandingo princes, includes the devices of almost all the tribes said to be of the same origin. This common origin may perhaps throw some light on the institution of regularized name changes observed in Black Africa, a problem which has claimed the attention of some authors; see in particular P. Humblot, Du nom et des appellations chez les Malinke /Names and nomenclature among the Maunke/.

778 346 2. Kangaba dugukolo ka gri fɛ̃w be. The sanctuary is a round hut provided with two doors, one oriented to the east and the

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other to the west, and covered with a thatched roof in which is hidden an object called dolin. The village is surrounded by several sacred places: a sunzun tree to the north; a well to the west; two stones, one (fara fi) situated near the village and the other (fara gwe) on the river's edge.

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The septennial ceremony is performed at night. Toward evening, the eldest of the Kéita goes secretly to remove the object dolin from the old thatch and hides it. The new roof is made with materials gathered by the descendants of Farako Makan Kegni (straw, bamboo, and fibers) while the women of the same relationship plaster the walls. The Dyabaté griot who will officiate provide themselves with a little stick of sunzun wood about the length of the ring finger with which they will rub their teeth; the twigs must be cut by the elder sister of the chief of the griot who gives her in exchange /xv/ a loin-cloth of eight [801] bands of white cotton and a number of cowries in multiples of 8 such as 8, 480.

The orators who will officiate during the night wear a white cap topped by a band of cotton of the same color and a yellow tunic (wolo) (see p. 20). Sitting inside the hut from which the old roof has been removed, facing east, they spit into a receptacle in order not to soil the ground. The Kéita remain outside the hut on a site marked by stones and covered with gravel collected in the river bed by young men. During the entire night, the griot, each in turn and encouraged by a relative, recite from the devices of all the tribes issued from Mandé. At dawn, they sing as they circle the construction; then the Kéita hoist up the new roof. Next, the elder

776 dried up, and fell; soon the only thing that remained of it was a block of wood called pembele. Out of its own substance, pembele created a female being, Mousso Koroni, and with her engendered all living things on earth, except for the human beings born of Faro. But following the disturbances created by Mousso Koroni, Pemba had to give up his power, and his Word became the property of Faro, who was entrusted with the reorganization of the universe.

Pemba was known to men who submitted to him on earth before they became aware of Faro who had remained secretly in the heavens (1). They worshipped him as their god and named him Ngala Pemba,

1. It is said:" Faro is a celestial being from above; if one says Pemba, it is because he has been seen on earth" (faro ye sana fɛ̃ ye; a fo pemba ye a ka yeli ye dugu la).

god Pemba, or Koni, to recall his origin and the awe inspired by creation (2).

2. The secret names of Pemba are innumerable.

The Pembele

• 778 776 At the present time, religious leaders and heads of families use the pembele to represent Pemba; it is a block of wood, the image of the original plank (3). This object has a hollow dug out in the

3. The symbolism of the pembele, summarized below, has been studied by S. de Ganay in "Aspect de mythologie et de symbolique bambara."

center, called sele dɛ̃, reminiscent of the hole at the bottom of the grave where the corpse is placed (4). Three times 22 slanted lines

4. See p. 248.

778 776 are engraved in the hollow; below it, two groups of seven lines, divided in the left section into 3 and 4, and in the right /36/ section into 4 and 3. The 22 lines on the left represent Pemba, the creator; the 22 lines on the right, the transmission of his word and his power to Faro. The 22 central lines are "a testimony to the foreknowledge he had of all things (1), " and the symbol of the great works he accom-

1. See S. de Ganay, Aspect de mythologie et de symbolique bambara, p. 192.

plished at the dawn of creation.

The two groups of 7 lines represent Pemba, 3, and Mousso Koroni, 4, in order to recall how Pemba, originally androgynous, "separated himself from his feminine part so that the two parts might unite as male and female to produce living things"(2).

2. See S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 195.

The wooden plank, in addition, is engraved at each end with 22 notches which are, to the left, Pemba and his words, and to the right, all the words entrusted to the spirits and still unknown to men.

The object, taken as a whole, is the image of the universe: its upper surface, upon which are inscribed the lines, is the sky; its lower surface is the earth; the four sides are the four directions of space. It is also the first grave ever dug for the ancestor; the sele dé concentrates "the active and latent energies." Here "the pembele can be considered as thought which is constantly unfolding and which, starting from its own substance, stretches out into time to entrust itself finally to Faro in the guise of the word" (3).

3. See S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 191

Finally, the pembele summarizes the myth of the creation and organization of the world by the series of 22 lines that decorate it; the duality expressed in the double engraving of 7 lines; its shape, reminiscent of the primeval plank, generator of life on earth; and the wood of which it is made—wood from the balanza tree, formerly master of creation.

All these characteristics justify the name of Ngala, god, which is given to the pembele, for it possesses in addition all the power and

776 strength (nyama) of the divinity it represents (1).
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1. That strength is particularly active at the angles of the plank and thus takes on the name boy nyama, "venomous nyama."

718 The pembele is an altar, a guarantee of prosperity, life, and the spiritual and material patrimony of the group to which it belongs. There are different types of pembele: those belonging strictly to families, on which the meat eaten by the family is carved, and those belonging to sanctuaries, which must be engraved with symbolic marks. The small board used for circumcisions bears the same name; it /37/ recalls Mousso Koroni's mutilation on the pembele and the origin of the removal of foreskin and clitoris from the human body (2).

2. See p. 38.

The role of Pemba, as promoter of the force, nyama, which activates all beings, and as the hypostasis of the earth, is illustrated by the ritual use the Bambara made of the pembele which represents Pemba.

[764] After each death, the head of the family gathers the force, nyama, which emanates from the corpse, and entrusts it to the pembele, "which preserves it until a birth occurs in the family." A parallel ritual bestows the force of the dead ancestor on the newborn child (3).

3. See p. 253.

At the time of the ceremonies relating to the large pembele, "all the participants bring a small piece of meat which, after having been placed on the plank, is eaten raw so that fire may not destroy the beneficial nyama emanating from the divinity itself" (4).

4. S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 199.

Finally, "in cases where it is necessary to obtain a maximum of nyama, infinitesimal slivers of wood are taken from the corners of the board, where its force is concentrated... However, if this practice is abused, the nyama of the earth becomes diminished. It is

778 understandable that the strength of the large pembele should be preserved intact since it represents the world. No ritual concerning it is celebrated alone by the man in charge without the presence of a council of elders. Its four corners can be scraped only under worthwhile circumstances for, according to the informant, the god pembele will not tolerate his being used for trifles. As the corners are gradually scraped off and consequently the nyama contained in these corners is reduced, the earth becomes worn out. And if the earth should lose its nyama, all would be empty of its substance; the millet would still grow but its stalk would yield no grain... women would bear no children, no longer having any nyama. Bereft of strength, people would no longer be able to fight. The earth would subsist, but would be sterile" (1).

1. S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 200.

The Balanza

824 The tree balanza, the plant form of Pemba's metamorphosis, vanquished by Faro, is no longer worshipped by men. However, the Bambara's attitude towards it and certain ritual gestures of which it is /38/ sometimes the object, recall the time when, after having spread its domination over all creation, it introduced death to the human species.

[761] In certain settlements, the belief is that whoever rests in its shade dies, the tree having taken his dya. In others, women still make it [782] offerings of karite oil, despite advice from men who have informed them of its inefficacy. They lie at its base, simulating illness, agony, and then death to recall the painful events that have brought them to men; finally they touch the ground successively with each of their four principal articulations as a sign of submission, before smearing the tree trunk with the oil they have brought. In still others, [843] in order to recall that births used to take place near the tree, pregnant women are presented by their husbands to the tree to each childbirth.

The fields surrounding the settlements in the region of Ségou are covered profusely with balanza. The device of Ségou, which tells of the history of the town, enumerates the names of the trees planted at the time of its founding. This device also mentions kokuruni (literally, little humped back), the balanza of Banankoroni (pl. I, a),

774 pale. It is manifested by a loss of strength and by illnesses affecting
784 the body openings: the man becomes blind and deaf-mute. He may
827 also become paralyzed. Generally he does not die but is pursued by ills until he purifies himself.

774 In addition, the tere changes when it is detached from its normal support; it then becomes nyama, a force which acts outside the body. Manifest in action, the fact can already be sensed in the spoken word, the bearer of nyama which immediately affects /63/ the person to whom it is addressed. The consequences of this action of the word are manifold.

761 At the time of death, the tere is completely liberated. Transformed
774 into nyama which leaves the body, it then becomes a very active
778 form which, in certain cases, can attack whomever it considers responsible for the death (1).

1. This very visible but incomplete aspect of the nyama is the one that has been most studied heretofore. On this subject, see the works of the Abbé Henry, Ch. Monteil, H. Labouret, L. Tauxier. Furthermore, in the sky, in space, and on earth, there is a nyama independent of the tere. The nature of this general and vital element has not been completely clarified by investigation.

774 Sacrificial beings, men or animals, or plants for ritual use never
778 release a dangerous nyama. Their spiritual principles and forces are channeled in the course of the ritual and directed toward the benefit of a supernatural power through the altar. The same is true of domestic animals immolated for consumption, in which case their forces are used over again and their death causes no disorder since it was foreseen by Faro's law concerning food.

On the other hand, the nyama of the bush animals (nyama baka) leave their dead bodies and pursue the hunter (2). To protect himself

2. The sick man may be treated in the following manner: seven (or a multiple of seven) cowrie shells are thrown upon the hide of the animal

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as an offering, which implies an apology with the understanding that the guilty man is given as many blows as there are cowrie shells offered. Next, the hide is soaked in water and washed. It is then secured so that it may not once again run away into the bush. These various operations are performed as often as necessary and until the crisis is over. On the other hand, this purification may be performed as often as necessary, but cannot be renewed in the case of a broken taboo.

the hunter carries an altar, dɔzoboli, suspended from his shoulder. Into it the animal's strength is channeled the moment it dies.

Every individual is, therefore, constantly faced during his lifetime with this active force which is liberated by the word, by certain acts, and by death. He must be in a position to fend off danger, to maintain his own tere which will help him if it is good, but which may on the contrary join the enemy forces and help them in their destruction if it is evil. Therefore, in the latter case the individual tries to change it by seeking the assistance and advice of the Komo diviner. But whatever happens, each individual, whether he wishes it or not, endures the attacks and the presence of numerous and varied nyama, because he has destroyed plants, trodden on insects, and wounded other living beings. Thus, he is at all times the bearer of displaced life forces that are foreign to him. Moreover, these forces find their way /64/ through him to all that he touches. He becomes a center of influences which first exert their action on his person and which he must take into account to maintain his integrity (1).

1. Although this feeling is very distinct in the mind of the Bambara, it does not make him inactive. The responsibility is only serious in the case of a voluntary act of useless destruction. In all other cases, the rites counteract the inconveniences. The Bambara are responsible, but free.

The wanzo

718 The wanzo, an evil force created in the beginning by Mousso
304 Koroni's impurity, was caused by the curse, of which she was the object after her betrayal, and which she communicated to the earth during her underground journey. After she had maimed herself on Pemba while having sexual relations with him, her jealousy pushed her into avenging herself on the women who mated with the balanza. Her madness and despair prompted her to pursue her betrayal to the very end. With nails and teeth she excised and circumcised the men and women she met during her travels. The wanzo she carried about thus penetrated the human species, making the operation necessary for all those to follow. Faro could not remedy this, but his protection is invoked for each child during the operation. The headdress of the circumcised symbolizes the sky and the purifying light.

At birth, each child receives the wanzo, "the word of Mousso Koroni," in its blood and on its skin at the moment of contact with the earth on which it is born. This force, also called kono nyama, "the nyama of the inside," is not to be confused with the tere but is of the same nature and is transmitted to everything the bearer touches.
[826] Its seat is mostly in the foreskin of the man and the clitoris of the woman, and it represents the disorder in the individual: "it makes man such that he can live with no one, can stand no one, and cannot stand himself." In addition, it is opposed to fertility.

In order to become a stable individual, to marry, procreate, and to sacrifice, the child must be rid of his wanzo. This is achieved in the course of circumcision or excision and in the rituals that end the seclusion of those operated upon. The greatest part of its force runs into the earth with the blood of the mutilated organ. The rest of it escapes with the smoke of the fire over which the children jump (three or four times according to their sex) before returning to their homes. The act of abandoning their /65/ old clothes and putting on new ones at that time confirms their new status. But the wanzo does not disappear; it is channeled into the masks of the ndomo society to which the uncircumcised belong (1). Similarly, when a child dies before being

1. See p. 222.

circumcised, appropriate rituals have the effect of channeling the

778 wanzo and directing it into the mask to prevent it from doing harm 384 (1). Thus, nothing of the individual forces is lost. The wanzo itself,

1. See p. 256.

harmful at the beginning, when properly channeled and directed, serves to consolidate the collective energies of the infantile societies based on it.

[581] Only when an adolescent has lost his wanzo is he permitted to marry; any individual would refuse to marry a partner who is not completely rid of it.

The Body

876 The Bambara have a notion of their bodies and the role of the different parts and organs. This notion is all the deeper because it is linked to that of the spiritual principles that animate it.

Indeed, the tere is determined by certain visible aspects of the body, while the ni and the dya also have sexes like the body. Therefore any study should include the links that unite the spiritual elements to the physical body in order to understand properly its state and function.

Blood, which together with breath is the seat of life, is also the vehicle of physical and spiritual forces that circulate with it in the veins and arteries. The blood sacrifice liberates these forces which sustain the altars, the soil, and the beings who receive them. Certain alliances are consecrated by an exchange of blood. The clear color of blood is proof of its purity: all infractions bring about a [841] change and cause it to become pale. Menstrual blood, testimony to Mousso Koroni's impurity and of the momentary sterility of women, is the principal taboo of the supernatural powers that create and protect life.

826 828 827 The head, which contains thought, is an essential part of the individual and his symbol: "the head of the members of society" is represented by a stroke in the course of the rituals performed by members of the Komo or the Kwore. Man grows through his head just as a plant "grows through its head bud" (2). Man's head is protected

2. The myth mentions the "head of the balanza" at the time that men broke the

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4. Fale kwonda mene šiw, tow bomaw ye dugu sa ka sigi, aw bemaw ya soro ni to ani kala. Falé, Kwonda, and Méné are the names of ancestors. The device is that of the Tangara of the village of Barbé.

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Moreover, the device also carries a statement of the bearer's genealogy, burudyu (1). To say this genealogy is equivalent to

1. The word ši, meaning race, is used to indicate the burudyu, which is comparable to the dambe of the Peul of Mopti.

"attacking the /77/ ancestors." To speak of them, to quote them, and to tell their exploits honors them and pacifies them. In the course of the recitation "the air emitted by the speaker" is transformed by the power of the spirit, Teliko, into coolness which penetrates the ancestors (2). The same is true for supernatural powers. As soon as

2. Teliko ba sumaya se u ma. "Téliko makes coolness come to them."

the Komo chief recites Faro's burudyu, "the air coming out of the chief's mouth is transformed into good nyama which penetrates Faro's body through his pupils and ears."

To tell a man his burudyu is to honor him greatly. He thinks of his ancestors, their fortune, and their glory; he is proud to be descended from them and is incited to do as well or better than they. The effect of the "good word" described above is due to the indirect but powerful action of the ancestors (3). The recitation by a third

3. However the soul (ni) of the cited ancestors is neither called upon nor displaced by the recitation. It is the vital force, nyama, which is put into motion here.

party has the effect of maintaining the individual in his being, of making him persevere by affirming it (4), for the device appeals to

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4. This effect is already obtained by the simple repetition of the family name with which one greets a man upon meeting him. It is common to hear the Blacks greet each other by repeating their dyamu to each other several times.

its possessor's soul, ni. If, at this moment, the person flattered is in a normal state, his device causes his "soul to swell and his body to harden, inciting him to courageous action and joy." If the contrary is true, anger or emotion takes the place of contentment and calmness.

The reciter receives in return the strength of the beneficial word which, having contented the person it was addressed to, contents him also. There is an exchange of nyama: that which the reciter sends out and that which he receives in return and from which he benefits.

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That is why the recitation of the device is not always left to the individual's discretion. Because of its importance, it has become a public function generally reserved for the griot (dyeliw) who form a caste practicing endogamy and who earn their living by getting paid to recite the devices and adulations in daily life as well as during public or religious ceremonies (1). But the fact that they earn a

1. The recitation given by anyone other than the griot would be far from producing the same effect.

salary for this service affects their dignity: nobody else ever recites the devices because nobody wishes to be taken for a griot, and nobody ever marries him. The griot is at once indispensable, feared, and despised. The mechanism of forces put into motion by his action makes it possible to understand the ambivalence of feelings of which he is the object.

/78/ When the words come out of his mouth, the griot's tere is transformed into nyama, which becomes filled with a force called kuma nyamu, "nyama of words." This force goes from the head to the mouth of the speaker and reaches the person addressed. If a man is wealthy and powerful, it is said that he gets the "nyama from the mouth of those griot who flatter him." He is then forced to pay them for their encouragement. If he does not, they remain silent when

551 passing before his door and thus empty him of his nyama. The man
576 grows thin and poor. The griot may bring about his death with evil
778 words, their nyama attacking the heart, the chest, then the entire
564 body of the victim.

The griot's power over the person he flatters becomes more involved and varies according to what he is reciting. If he recites the burudyu several times, if he speaks at length of the ancestors, their nyama enters his mouth and is added to his own, thus reinforcing the power of the word. Thus, when the griot recites a barama without receiving payment, his nyama attacks the person spoken to. If this offense is repeated and if the burudyu is recited, the man is forced to pay if he does not wish to be attacked by the much more formidable nyama of the ancestors.

In these various situations, the tere of the person flattered intervenes: if it is good, it fights to defend the person, but if it is weak or wicked, it joins the ancestral forces and the person is doubly threatened.

The recitation is always made by the griot before a witness so that his action will be more binding and make the miser lose face. On the other hand, a man who pays the griot generously is looked after by the latter who sings of his generosity on all occasions and announces the sum he has received; often he does not hesitate to exaggerate the total amount received if he can hope to profit by doing so (1).

[789] 1, If the griot knows that the wealthy man he is addressing is miserly, he rubs his teeth with roots which he knows has the power to make his words even more effective.

[554] Sometimes a man reaches a secret agreement with the griot in order to gain prestige. He publicly gives him a considerable sum, part of which the griot returns the following day as agreed upon. The gift is so generous that none can surpass it.

[585 561] This practice is particularly apparent at the time of marriage. The men of the same age grade as the groom outdo each other in their gifts to the griot. The one who has given most passes for the most generous. Sometimes the griot invents a new barama on the spot even though he does not know the device.

551 The device is recited on numerous occasions. After a birth, the
576 griot proclaim it in the course of the name-giving ceremony, address-
778 ing themselves to the father, then to the newborn child /79/ who thus
564 receives it for the first time. At a marriage the barama of the two partners are alternatly recited. In everyday life, the recitation is carried on most frequently during religious ceremonies or feasts. In the hunt or at war, it has the effect of helping the participants and increasing their courage (1). In a meeting it is used to greet people

[727] 1. If the griot recites it to a war chief and the town under attack is taken, he receives part of the loot.

bearing the same name, and if one of the assistants is to be particularly honored, the first words of his device are recited.

551 In case of illness, the ally (senãnku) (2) comes to the patient's
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2. See p. 119.

side and recites his barama to encourage him and help him get well. If he is dying, the recitation, which is then the equivalent of a prayer, may help his soul return. After death, the ally, the griot, and the [764] blacksmiths come near the corpse to recite his barama in order to honor him.

551 The devices pertaining to the various crafts are used when address-
576 ing the artisan with whom one has business. Thus the blacksmith to
539 whom one brings work is greeted first by his name to which is then added:

"ini fara ani goni, you are with stone and fire."

A person crossing a field will say to the farmer bent over the earth: "i ni tye i ba ka kusebe daba, greeting to him who handles the hoe well," or simply: "i ni tye daba la, greeting to him who is with the hoe." To the shoemaker one would say: "bana ani ba golo, (you are) with the acacia (3) and the goat leather."

[386] 3. This refers to the bana or boina (Acacia arabica) used by the shoemaker to make a black dye.

845 851 each twin is the dya of the other and that this term means "shadow of the body," "spiritual double," as well as "balance." To trade is dyago.

845 301 [531] Three or four days after the name-giving ceremony, depending on their sex, the twins are given bracelets of white metal representing their dya. Geometrical symbols of the universe, the sky and the earth, are engraved on each of these (1). The opening of the bracelet repre-

1. This figure is formed by a rectangle divided into two equal superposed squares, including a multiplication sign in the lower square to represent the earth, and an open v in the upper square to represent the sky.

sents that of the incomplete terrestrial world. When the twins die [766] they will be buried with the bracelets closed over their arms or their ankles to signify that they have penetrated a complete and closed world. Formerly the sacrifices to Faro were carried out with ornaments 845 borrowed from a twin. The person making the sacrifice presented 301 them to the /87/ river while saying: "The iron of the twins is witness 782 to the sacrifice offered to Faro." (2) After the ceremony, everyone

2. Flani neke ye ma ɛ̃ere ye faro sõni la.

gave white kola nuts to the twin; the interested party then went to the village square and waved in the air his arms bedecked with ornaments to spread to the four cardinal points Faro's beneficial nyama acquired in the course of the sacrifice. In certain areas twins wear a pendant in the shape of double slave fetters, called dyõ neke, "irons of the captive," or an amulet called sinzin, "support," composed of a little piece of wood carved in the shape of a double cup and preferably made by a Bozo. A man who has had twins three times [778] must acquire a double pot which is always kept full of water and which becomes the object of an annual sacrifice (3).

3. See p. 124, n. 1.

845 Up to the time they are twelve, the children bathe themselves preferably in the Niger. They supposedly can walk on water and never run the risk of drowning.

The twins do not become separated from each other any more than the dya is separated from the living being to which it is attached. They wear the same clothes and eat the same food simultaneously. Formerly male twins married the same woman. If one of them dies 845 at an early age, the blacksmith carves a small wooden doll called 778 flanitokele, which takes the name of the deceased and which the mother puts on the mat next to the living child. The latter takes this doll with him at the time of his circumcision and keeps it during the period of his seclusion in order to bring it back to the parental home whence it is never removed. When he marries, he sticks the doll into the earth along with another piece of wood symbolizing the wife of the deceased. Since twins are in a sense a living replica of Faro, none can bother them without showing disrespect to him. On the other hand, they are the object of attention and precaution on the part of their family as well as their neighbors. Their presence is always beneficial. Considered invulnerable, twins used to march ahead of [728] troops in times of war and would serve as inviolable intermediaries between the warring parties during truce.

The Hermaphrodite

826 The hermaphrodite, being both male and female, is to all extent and purpose his own twin. Consequently, he has no dya (1).

[825 304] 1. The hyena is considered a hermaphrodite; it can engender or conceive, depending on its size and strength, "the stronger impregnating the weaker." A tattooing system is based upon this belief.

/88/ The Albino

[143] Albinos of light or reddish skin and red hair are called gombele or yepege, this latter term being reserved for those who show the most accentuated characteristics.

826 833 The albino is supposedly born of sexual relations which took place in the middle of the day when the sun is in the koblenkaba, sky of

826 [833] Faro's wrath—a fact which constitutes a serious breaking of taboo. The consequence of this is to coalesce in the maternal womb the twins originally granted to the woman by Faro and to decolorize the skin of the being thus formed. Because of this fact, the albino, the embodiment of twins, does not inherit the spiritual princples of a deceased person and is also a new being given to men by Faro. But the impurity he has acquired increases tenfold his tere and his wanzo, [304] which are so active that the circumciser must sacrifice on his own personal altars before performing the operation. From the ambivalence of the albino, originally of the same essence as Faro but fallen because of the impurity transmitted by his parents, stem various customs and representations. (1).

1. This ambivalence is also at the root of the belief that the albino is a being formerly provided with wings and able to fly (see p. 68, a quality he lost after his contact with the impure soil.

826 ●718 His body is believed to be endowed with special powers. The person who owns his skull will have a numerous family and prosperity; his hair brings wealth; the marrow of his bones provides gold and copper. If he is made to sit at a place where bones are buried, whatever one asks for is granted. His excrements, mixed with seed, have the effect of increasing the harvest for the year.

826 782 Because of the value attributed to the albino he is a choice victim for the sacrifices to Faro. His nyama is such that he can be sacrificed without prayer, the act itself constituting an efficacious invocation. Lacking living albinos, men often tried to appropriate the remains of a buried body.

Chapter 4

SACRIFICE AND THE ALTAR

782 To call upon spiritual forces and to influence them, the Bambara use prayer, offering, and sacrifice. They perform oral and manual

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3. The mechanism of blood sacrifice among the Bambara is comparable to that observed among the Dogon and described by M. Griaule, "Remarques sur le mécanisme du sacrifice dogon (Soudan Français) /Remarks on the Mechanism of Dogon Sacrifice (French Sudan)/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes. Vol. 10, 1940, pp. 127 ff.

the altar. At the time men gave the balanza their blood, they would let it dry and then, licking the trunk with their tongue, would reclaim it after it was rid of the element constituting the offering. All their active forces passed into the tree and a substance almost totally lacking in vitality was returned to them.

782 The blood sacrifices which were originally instituted on the trunk of the balanza are actually performed in the most varied sites: earth, trees, ponds, wells, etc. Moreover, as the Bambara developed their technology, they would sacrifice on those objects, utensils, or contrivances which they discovered or invented such as the forge and its tools, the loom, and agricultural implements.

782 The Bambara also have altars which may be classified into three
778 categories:

1. The wood stumps called pembele, which represent Pemba. Many heads of families or of religious societies keep one of these (1).

1. See p. 77 for a description of the pembele altars.

A unique sanctuary at Massala is a pilgrimage center for Bambara from all regions who come in great numbers to take part in the annual sacrifice. Besides pembele, it contains two large pots, da, covered with sacrificial blood, which give the sanctuary its name. It is in this place that ordeals are executed, judicial questions settled, and serious illnesses treated.

2. The altars, made of stones crudely cut and occasionally engraved, have their origin in a mythical stone, issued out of the seventh part of the earth, and situated under the mound where Faro's female twins were born. Having a red color, it was itself a symbol of sacrifice. It divided itself and gave birth to all other sacrificial stones (Fig. 5 and Pl. V. b).

782 /91/ Actually the altars from the region of Ségou originate mostly
778 in Toko, a settlement situated to the south of the town where the king's
326 blacksmiths lived. The ancestor of these blacksmiths is buried in the rocks which border Toko and from which the stones used as altar are

Fig. 5.—Stone altar, fara ba, of Banankoroni, consecrated to ancestors. It is stuck into the ground above the skull and bones of an albino, hoes, and a circumcision knife. The ritual drawing traced during the ceremonies of the renewal of the year represents the torches and the whips of the Kworè, 3 men and 4 women, which recall the number 7, image of the creation (Informant's drawing).

carved. If a village chief wants to obtain one he sends a delegate to Toko. This emissary receives from the blacksmith the stone appropriate to the function of the altar and the quality of the person

782 requesting it. Thus, a black stone is given to those who have broken
778 a /92/ taboo, a stone of two colors to a stranger, and the red stone
[326] "rounded and polished by the ancestors" to those whom one wishes to honor.

The stone altars which are innumerable (both private and public ones) generally represent the ancestors. When they are placed in the fields they receive the sacrifices offered in their name for helping the crops. At the intersection of narrow roads and on the public square, they assure the stability of ancestral customs.

3. The Bambara also sacrifice on manufactured objects which bear the general name of boli (literally, to run) and which are the equivalent of the altars although they are of an entirely different nature than the preceding ones. Their origin is different. To the initiates they originate in the twelfth bangini which gave birth to the day (see pp. 30-31). In the shape of "globules" they were released in space by Faro as he descended to the earth; they were collected by the spirits of the air and of the ground into which some of them penetrated, and were later given to men (1).

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1. The popular belief has it that the eight principal boli of the Bambara were brought back from Mecca by the famous Makanta Djigui, a personage whose name is cited in numerous prayers (particularly in the course of the ceremonies of the Komo).
L. Tauxier attributes this tradition to Islam influence under the reign of Soundiata's successor, Malinké Kankan Moussa, who made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 (La Religion bambara, p. 287, n. 3).

The name of Makanta Djigui is cited in the device (burudyu) of the Komo: the chiefs of this important society carry their altars each year to the shore of the Niger near the village of Tikko on the spot where the historical canoe which transported him is said to have sunk.

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It is possible that this figure played the role of a religious legislator by codifying certain beliefs and founding associations around the boli which, according to qualified informants, existed before his intervention. On this point see also L. Tauxier, La Religion bambara, p. 287, n. 3.

The versions of the voyage of Makanta Djigui, which the natives readily tell, are innumerable. See the Abbé Henry, L'Âme d'un peuple africain: les Bambara /The Soul of an African People: The Bambara/, pp. 131-133: Ch. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta /The Bambara of Ségou and of Kaarta/, p. 170; D. Traore, Makanta Djigui, fondateur de la magie soudanaise /Makanta Djigui, Founder of Sudanese Magic/, pp. 23-25.

We have collected two versions of this episode, which we do not feel useful for presentation in this study.

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The boli, also called nyana, are made with the most diverse materials: hyena tails, peppers, honey, coal, precious metals, parts of the body. Each element has its value, and its use is determined by its place in the categories: the time of its manufacture is also important. But whatever its composition, each boli, whose name expresses the universal movement of things, is a combination of elements representing the parts of the universe (1). /93/ It is,

1. At the present stage of this investigation the classification by categories of materials or elements composing the Bambara universe has only been outlined. It is only after the completion of this study that the exact role given the elements composing the boli will become clear and that the problem of the origin of these altars can be considered.

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therefore, the symbol of the universe and the receptacle of the forces which animate it. These forces, already very powerful at the time the boli is made, are constantly kept up, increased by the additions received in the course of the blood sacrifices of which the boli is the object. It becomes a concentration of forces, which gives back in proportion to that which it receives and of which the owner is the first beneficiary.

A boli is also an intermediate agent, permitting one to reach a supernatural power—an ancestor or a living being who impregnates it with strength by coming to consume the offering over it. Through the spilled blood, this strength reenters the victim as well as the sacrificer if he partakes of it.

Therefore a boli contains:

A part of the soul (ni) and the force (nyama) of the being to whom it is consecrated.

The ni and the nyama of the victims offered to it.

The nyama of individuals who, having broken the taboos dictated by the divinity, have died as a result.

The Bambara differentiate two kinds of boli: the most numerous, whose power is relatively benign, called soni (literally, to give little); and those which contrariwise are charged with powerful, truly dangerous forces, called saraka (1). The latter, by their power

1. The čuafebla is a soni; the mbe ndyugu ka is a saraka (see pp. 175 and 176).

alone, supposedly kill the victims offered them without making it necessary to cut the victim's throat. It suffices to present to them the victims while reciting an appropriate prayer to make the victims die. It is then said that the "boli has made the blood come out" and this death is equivalent to a blood sacrifice (2). These boli also

2. If the victim does not die fast enough, the person offering sacrifice may "insult" the altar to force it to act.

attack those whom a person has vowed to persecute.

It is said that a boli "is hot and has a dry throat" and that is why occasionally the ritual includes collecting the blood in a gourd in which [the boli] is allowed to soak.

778 Some boli are individual, sometimes inherited from an ancestor
782 and consecrated to their owner whose strength they maintain. Others are collective and consecrated to supernatural powers which protect the life of the community.

778 The taboos relating to beings whose soul "impregnates" the boli
782 and to the elements which compose them are decreed at the time /94/
784 of their making. They must be scrupulously respected by those responsible and by those officiating. The boli are generally placed in a sheltered spot either in sanctuaries or in an isolated room of the house, which no one enters without the permission of those responsible. This is done in order to avoid the dangers resulting from broken taboos which would affect the integrity of the boli as well as that of its owners. The handling of the boli, dangerous as it is, is restricted to priests, to the head of the family, or to the owner.

782 Victims most commonly offered on all altars are domestic animals such as fowl, cattle, sheep, and goats. However, on the altars of hunters and those of the uncircumcised, only wild animals are immolated.

The color of the victim is determined by the quality of the being to which it is consecrated as well as by the altar itself. Animals of
[822] a red color are generally killed on the boli of religious societies, thereby increasing the nyama which they contain. White, the symbol of light and purity, is reserved for Faro.

782 The death of the victim is used as an occasion for divination.
787 The throat is cut in such a way as to prolong the death struggle so that the officiating person may interpret the position of the body. The cutting process is followed by eating which has the function of communion. Furthermore, certain parts of the body (the liver) are left on the altar; others such as the jawbone, feathers, and hair are kept as tokens by the person offering the sacrifice.

782 The ritual is usually accompanied by offerings of boiled millet as "refreshment," since the blood is given to the altar as a nourishment. Kola nuts, chosen for their shape and color, are divided into two portions: the officiating person chews one half and spits it out onto the altar before eating the other half.

In former times, human sacrifice was also practiced. These took place in serious cases involving the kingdom, the king, or the chiefs. The usual victim was the albino.

773 564 326 412 The first forged tool, the kongobwona (literally, to abandon hunger), is still used by blacksmiths today as a ritual axe (Fig. 9, E).

It is made up of a wooden handle terminating in an enlargement which forms its bulk, and pierced by a bent iron rod which in turn holds the cutting edge (farabye) of the axe proper. The handle is very long, allowing the man to work without bending over.

The tool justifies its name for it brought prosperity to the craftsmen. The symbolism of the different sections shows this: the enlarged part of the consecrated model, which each blacksmith keeps on his altar and which is the object of regular rituals, is hollowed out and holds money, millet, and copper. The iron rod which pierces it represents at its lower extremity the tongue of the oldest of the Gwonna, and at its upper extremity that of the youngest, thus recalling the actions and the words of those who discovered the metal for the benefit of all.

Later, blacksmiths manufactured other models of iron axes and hoes, copying those previously used, but reducing their size.

Each day the end piece of the wooden hoes was abandoned at the crossroads after they had been used in honor of the local spirit. The worker kept only the handle and carved a new tool for the following day. The handles of hoes and axes were considered to be people because they were impregnated with the vital force of those who held them. The farmer left the cutting edge (of stone or iron) in his field and brought home the handle which he placed on his mat at night.

[782] Weapons and tools were the objects of regular sacrifices. The handle was removed and the blood of victims would flow first into the hole used to secure it, then on the cutting edge, while the officiating person recited a prayer.

773 564 326 412 778 Today, the assemblages of ancient tools are called makorobaw ka minew (literally, tools of the great ancestor). Considered as the most respectable and precious /119/ testimony of their civilization, models of each object are kept in sanctuaries called makoroba so (literally, house of the ancestors) which are generally natural caves or holes dug in the ground, reminiscent of primitive habitations. These tools are identified with the ancestors who used them and who were, long before the organization of religious societies, the object of a regular cult. That is why, in deference to this fundamental hierarchy, they are presented to the circumcised in front of the family altars (1) at the time of the initiation of the Komo. Similarly, they

1. Particularly in the village of Konodimini in the Ségou region.

773 564 326 412 778

are removed from the sanctuaries, honored, and replaced before the Komo altars during the agricultural and funerary rituals; to fail to observe this rule would constitute the breaking of a taboo and entail the most serious disorders.

In the course of the annual ceremony consecrating the dead, these tools are carried to the cemetery and receive as many victims as do the dead, for they represent the ancestors.

The kotigi brings them to the same place on two other occasions: during the agricultural ceremonies carried on after the growth of the ear of corn and after threshing the harvest. Axes and hoes are presented one by one at the tombs of the dead and then, reunited in the center of the cemetery, each of them is used once to cut a branch or to dig the soil. This ritual gesture recalls the use which the ancestors made of them.

The Forge

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The blacksmith establishes his workshop under a shed, usually located in one of the squares or at the entrance to the village. It is the simplest of its kind and involves a minimum of equipment. The forge represents the craftsman: the furnace his body, the bellows his testicles, the blast pipe his penis, the fire his head. When the red hot metal is beaten with the hammer, a replica of the gosilãnde, which symbolizes the universe, the sparks are the lightning and thunder bolts.

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The altar of the forge, sometimes situated to the west of the hearth, contains blackened hoe, pickaxe and axe handles, coal (fininkoro, literally, old coal) ashes kneaded with clay (buguri, literally, ashes of the hearth), all of which belonged to former owners, and finally an axe kongobwona called "mother of the altar," a smaller replica of the ancestral axes.

The bulk of the wood which holds the iron hooks and the blade /120/ is hollowed out and forms a kind of storage divided into three compartments.

The upper one contains money so that whatever happens, the blacksmith will have means to live.

In the central compartment are placed copper and iron, metals which the blacksmith works, as well as water, basic element and preferred seat of Faro, master of the word.

326 778 243 The lower compartment contains millet from a field called kongobwona foro, reserved for the needs of the cult of the forge. This land is placed under the guardianship of the patriarch belonging to the Gwonna family, and its upkeep is assured by the community. The seeds are given by each blacksmith to the old man who sows them himself. The work of cultivation and threshing is done communally. The millet is stored in the old man's granary and each blacksmith receives a share. This share is not eaten, but is put aside. From time to time the artisan takes a few seeds which he places as an offering on his altar, and which remain for a time in the compartment reserved for them; then they are considered to have been eaten by the axe and are removed and replaced by others. Part of the millet is kept as seed for the following year.

326 778 789 Each compartment is open and the blacksmith may insert his fingers; if his earnings are insufficient, he rubs his body and tongue with the hand which he has just dipped into the pocket containing money; the price, set by the spoken word, will not be questioned by the client. If he goes to work in his field, he places his hand into the millet each morning to draw upon the strength it contains and to improve the results of his agricultural work. If he burns himself while working at the forge, he dips his fingers into the third compartment and cools himself in Faro's water. It is this same water which a young artisan must drink at the beginning of his apprenticeship.

326 778 776 The triangular iron, farabye, which constitutes the axe proper is placed under the power of three spirits belonging to the group of air spirits: A gayru who revealed iron to men; Tengu who taught them Faro's supremacy; and Gullé. The first two are the masters of the bellows and direct the work as a whole; the third does their bidding and teaches men the technology of ironwork (1). When the owner

1. The spirit would have refused to teach the blacksmiths the working of copper and gold, as these two metals belonged to Faro who reserved for himself the right to use them. Since iron was black he had abandoned its use to the spirits of the air.

of the altar dies, the /121/ axe is removed and placed in the village sanctuary where the ancestral tools are kept. But the remaining objects are inherited by the son. [428]

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778 In addition, in each blacksmith's home, a replica of the kongobwona axe preserved in the common sanctuary, constitutes the family altar, passed on from father to son, on which the interested party offers to his ancestors regular or occasional sacrifices. Sometimes it also possesses a small iron plate upon which is engraved a drawing representing the creation and in particular the "spirals of the creative spirit at the cardinal angles," the multiplication sign, etc. The angles of this object are drawn up to indicate that the world is lifting itself up, awakening, and constantly reviving.

The forges of the village artisans are generally grouped in a public square, around a large anvil, kula, held in a wooden piece forming its base and buried deep in the ground (Pl. IV, b). In front of this communal anvil judicial affairs are settled, such as marriages or broken agreements; before it vows are pronounced and solemn promises are made to the boli. It is also here that the purifications for breaking taboos take place.

The blacksmiths are also communal owners of a certain number of ritual objects which are usually kept by the kotigi and brought out for religious ceremonies. Among these, the nege dyun (literally, mother of iron) (1) is a lump of iron forged in the likeness of the

1. Dyun means "mother" in archaic language.

semẽkala (see Fig. 9, B), on which the kotigi draws small lines. Some of these lines represent the heads of each of the Gwonna blacksmiths; others, well separated from the first, recall the heads of the artisans belonging to other families. The whole symbolizes the total number of blacksmiths in the village. The nege dẽ (literally, son of iron) is a ritual bell also decorated with lines representing members of the blacksmith families.

After it has been made, the nege dyun is placed in the sanctuary of ancestral tools. It remains there two or three months in order to become saturated with the strength of the ancestors and from time to time receives the blood of sacrifices performed at night. It is after this period that it is placed with the nege dẽ in the kotigi's home.

Each artisan offers individual sacrifices on the kongobwona axe kept in his home as well as on the objects /122/ contained in the altar of his forge: at the same time his tools receive libations of boiled millet mash.

326 In addition, each year the blacksmiths join together and offer a
778 sacrifice on the communal anvil. All tools are placed around it,
796 overflowed with the blood of the victims.

An annual ceremony which also brings the craftsmen together has the purpose of asking Faro to help in the cooling of the wrought iron and to give the water into which the iron is dipped the strength to fulfill its function. Assembled before the kotigi's forge, they bring a certain number of tomatoes which are first presented to the altar, then to the ancestral axe farakun, on which each one in turn licks with his tongue.

Keeping their mouths closed so as not to let the strength thus gathered escape, they all walk toward the river, while one of the [534 participants strikes up, on the ritual bell (nege dẽ) with a lump of 533] (nege dyun), the rhythm called klide fo (literally, rhythm of the sons of the testicles) (1) addressed to the one-arm blacksmith, the

[522] 1. Kli dẽ, "son of the testicle," is one of the ritual jokes addressed to the blacksmiths by their senãnku.

bolokuruni, Faro's companion. Once on the bank, the kotigi undresses and throws himself into the water. When re reappears on the surface, all the participants open their hands the better to seize the strength of Faro and his companion, which the man is supposed to bring back. They rush to help him dress and the one who succeeds in touching him believes he receives Faro's special favors.

The tomatoes are then squashed into a gourd and the pulp is thrown into the river at a deep spot where each participant draws water and drinks to communicate with Faro. The group then returns, bringing back in the gourd a little water into which each one dips his individual axe, starting with the patriarch who, at the end of the ceremony, drinks up the rest.

326 If a woman is sterile, she asks the help of the three spirits protect-
778 ing the forge as they have the reputation of being very prolific.
842 Without her presence, the blacksmith crouches before the altar with his hands spread out, his head lowered, and prays. The woman must then swear to respect scrupulously the taboo of the invoked spirits, which is to pronounce their name. She may also ask the blacksmith to implore the help of the ritual ashes of the altar.

Pottery

323 The ancient Bambara did not know about pottery. At the time they
773 lived in caverns, they let their meat dry in the sun on the rocks. Next, they manufactured receptacles by hollowing out stones, of which certain unused millstones /125/ seen today are copies. When they had invented fire, they cooked meat by spitting it with skewers of green sunzun wood and by exposing it to flames and live coals.

Later, they shaped and dried vessels of coarse clay, imitating the hollowed-out stones. One of these vessels, which was exposed to the fire in order to cook the food it contained, was observed to have changed color, hardened, and become more resistant. In this way they developed the technology of making pottery at a time when they still had only wooden tools.

323 Since this technology is related to the invention of fire, the wives
326 of the blacksmiths were the first to practice it.(1). Today they form
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1. The different techniques of pottery making were supposedly revealed to the village of Gwondougou (see p. 155) by the Soba spirits of the crossroads.

a society (tô) in each village and own many altars entrusted to the care of the head of the society.

The principal altar, the dyo kala, which represents the thumb of the potters, is made of wood carved in the shape of a thumb and engraved with symbolic lines. To learn her trade, each initiate is lightly touched on the head with it. The head of the society spills her blood over it in the case of a broken taboo affecting the society. But its principal function is to be the receptacle for the spiritual forces of the group: upon a member's death, this object, placed upon the corpse, gathers up the soul which escapes from the body.

[252] In certain villages, the pots with holes, ñintin, used for cooking couscous, are placed near the village upon the pile of ashes from the great hearth where the pots are fired (see Pl. IV, a); they also serve as altars at the time when the potters are consecrated.

323 Since her childhood the potter, following the example of her
561 seniors, practices kneading and shaping little pots, bokofani (literal-
575 ly, little clay pots). After excision at the required age, she joins

/128/ Chapter 6

THE CULTS

794 The purpose of the Bambara cults, whether they are of individuals, families, or villages, is to promote the functioning of the universe in an orderly way, which includes the preservation and conservation of individuals and the whole community in their spiritual or material forms.

The following chapter is not exhaustive. We have described a certain number of cults selected from the most representative. Under their apparently diverse aspects, shown in their purposes as well as in their modes, all are integrated into the system of Bambara thought.

I. Individual and Family Cults

●778 794 Over individual altars sheltered within the family enclosure or preserved in the private room (čěsó) of their owner, the rituals of "maintaining self" are practiced. They assure the stability of physical (čuafebla, čuafebyeni) and social (dyamana tigi jigi) forces; they afford protection outside dangers (mbe ndyugu kã̀); they are the temporary containers of souls at the time of death (kere la boli ni).

Since man must, in many circumstances of his life, remedy any depletion of his strength, these altars represent repositories, relays, in which at least certain elements of his being are integrated. They permit him to regroup or revitalize his physical or psychical forces for his own well-being as well as for that of the community.

A. The česo

In the homes the movable altars are kept in a room called česo (literally, house of man), which is reserved for the /129/ owner and which contains, besides his weapons and agricultural implements, family altars, either collective or individual (1) depending upon

1. The following description is that of the house of Tètè, an important citizen of Banankoroni.

●778 whether he is head of a family, head of a religious society, or a
794 bachelor.

These objects are hung from the ceiling or hidden away in corners from the looks of people and the risks of impurity. The walls of the room, daubed up to a third of their height /130/ with black earth,

[532]

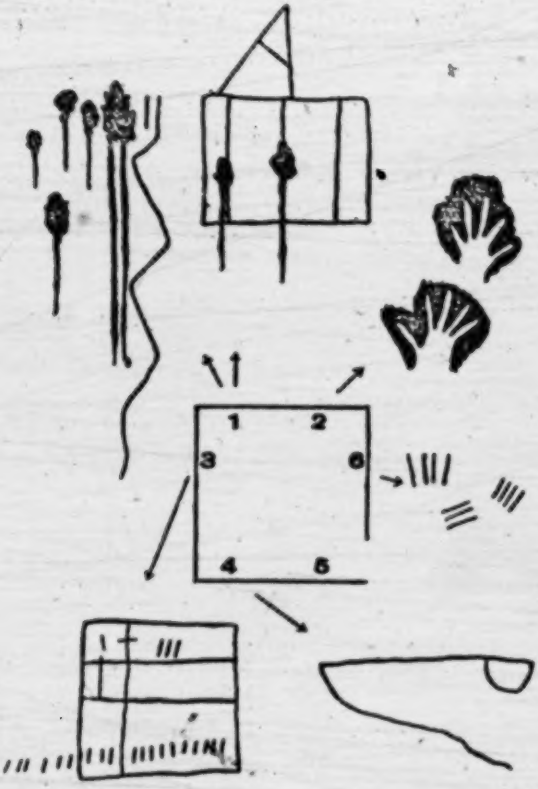

Fig. 10 — Diagram of the ceso of Tètè, important citizen of Banankoroni and reproduction of the drawings on the walls: 1. The ancestors and their home. 2. The hands of the living. 3. The sky, space, the earth, and the 22 categories. 4. The Komo's whip. 5. A red stain. 6. The owner (three) and his two wives (four and four).

symbolizing Faro's presence and protection, are covered with paintings and drawings.

778 794 532 On one of the walls, small lines representing the ancestors and a broken line representing the human person are drawn with millet mash; on another, engraved with a sharp point, is a schematic geometrical figure of the ancestral home; it is accompanied by the silhouettes of two hands (see Fig. 10, 1 and 2), the hands of the living, "crossed and reaching out to the world of the dead." The left hand, symbol [826] of disorder, incertitude, and the variations of human conscience, is placed below to the right of the other to recall man's obligation towards his right hand, symbol of order, righteousness, fidelity, and work (1). Thus arranged, the hands express complete submission of

1. In making this drawing the following words are repeated: "I place my right hand on the wall night and day," neben kinin bolo da koko la ǰu ni kle.

the living to the ancestors.

Farther away are drawn the divisions of the universe (Fig. 10, 3) with the help of a square divided into three compartments symbolizing from top to bottom: the sky and water, the air, the earth.

In the upper square to the left, a line represents Faro in all his power, sole master of sky, water, and life. A horizontal line recalls his domination over the world. The lines that follow are his children. The total indicates the feminine form of the spirit.

All individual or family sacrifices offered to Faro are performed over his sign which the officiator rubs with copper and crushed tomatoes in order "to thank the spirit who protects his dya, and to pray to the spirit to give his wife children."

The central rectangle is the domain of Téliko: air and wind. The small line which vertically bisects the square on the left represents the spirit attempting to penetrate into Faro's plan to vanquish him. His defeat is indicated by the fact that the major portion of the line is situated in Téliko's domain, since the latter violated only temporarily the boundaries of his adversary.

The lower rectangle outlines the earth, seat of the Soba spirits. The row of 22 short lines which covers it recalls the 22 elements of creation, "the 22 things indispensable to man in this world."

On another wall, fire is indicated by two whips: that of Faro, lightning, and that of Komo, the law. They also recall "the power

778 794 532 of the initiates' word" and are exposed to fire to increase this power (Fig. 10, 4). Beside them, /131/ a large red stain, dyoli ǰikin, painted in ochre, states that man is the sacrificer, that the cult has immolation as its basis. Of such a man it is said that: "he reckons with the proof of the blood (1)" (Fig. 10, 5).

1. Dyoli tamaše mine ba.

Above the bed which consists of a simple mat placed on the ground, three engraved lines symbolize the man and two four lines the two women who alternately share his bed (Fig. 10, 6).

778 794 532 413 In certain villages, the drawings are made by an instrument called ngwoni, used during the rituals of the year's "renewal" (2).

2. Particularly at Banankoroni.

The point of baobab wood, which is used for engraving, is as slim as a slat and fits on to a kind of racket made of sunzun wood which holds a net of da fibers. The hide of a male goat, called soni wolo ni (literally, soul of the skin of sacrifice), and two handles of ngolobe wood (3) complete the assemblage. The net, made of sixteen cotton

3. Combretum michrantum.

threads dyed with red ochre, kolo, is called ngwoni kene ba (literally, great space of the ngwoni) and represents Faro.

778 794 532 Before being used, the instrument is washed with water which will be used later to cook the food for the family. Next, tomatoes are pressed on the net and the juice runs into the hide which forms a pocket; holding the point in the right hand and the handle in the left, one then makes the drawings on the wall of the česo. The seeds of the fruit remain in the pouch until the following year to serve as a testimony to the offering. Next, with a red hot knife the following lines are engraved on the object: four lines, representing Faro, and two 16 lines, multiples of four, the female symbol. After each cut, "a rag saturated with fresh water is placed on it to soothe the pain." The frame is saturated with kola nut extract and four dots, the womb of women, are also marked with a black stone, kolofin. An egg is then smashed on the object to "refresh the soul of the ensemble."

B. The Altars

778 794 Each family head wears a small altar called kere la boli ni (literally, little side altar), which maintains relations with the souls of the members of the family for which he is, in part, responsible. /132/ In case of illness he offers sacrifices on this boli for the recovery of the patient. In case of death, he keeps the soul in it temporarily before carrying it to the collective altar of the Komo (1). He also sacrifices on this

1. The society, the altars, and the role of the Komo are described on pages ff.

altar at the time of sowing.

[763] If the family head is himself very ill, the altar is placed on his head in an effort to replace the soul which is escaping with that which the altar contains. If he dies, it is placed on his chest to take in the [764] soul which is then transported to the sanctuary of the Komo. At the end of seven days, the object is given to the deceased's eldest son who, upon becoming family head, sacrifices two goats to the Komo on this occasion.

The ɣuafebla (literally, worn at the hip) is made by a father for his son when the latter attains maturity and is on the point of leading a man's life, farming his own field and founding a family.

If there is no Komo in the village, the father may make it earlier, right after the name-giving ceremony.

The altar is made of hyena tails, scorpion tails, and whole peppers tied with a little stick; it represents the owner's flesh and blood.

It receives an annual sacrifice at the time of sowing after the collective offering tothe Komo. This takes place in the family courtyard in the presence of all the members of the family (2). Moreover,

778 794 773 241 2. The cult rendered on this altar brings the intervention of the Sago spirit whose agricultural role is still obscure at the present stage of the inquiry. He taught men how to water their fields.

"Two birds konodyanfi began to circle and sing above the workers in the fields;

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the latter abandoned their hoes in order to watch them. The birds fetched water with their beaks on the shore of a neighboring pond and returned to pour it at the foot of a millet stalk, the ear of which was not yet formed. The men put a mark on this stalk in order to recognize it and later observed that it produced a finer ear than the others. Imitating the bird, they dampened their plantings and watered their fields; their harvest was considerably improved by it. They kept up this habit and, in acknowledgment, produced a cult to the Sago spirit whose emissaries the birds were and who comes to slake his thirst at the ǰuafebla."

778 it is the object of sacrifices when important business is being handled:
794 marriage, private or administrative action, fight against an epidemic.
[428] A son may inherit his father's altar and keep it with his own which he wears tied to his hip.

The ǰuafebyẽni (literally, little horn at the hip) is composed of a cowrie, taken from Faro's granary, copper which is the altar's soul /133/ (ni), pepper, charcoal, and honey. This mixture is introduced into a ram's horn decorated with cowries at its opening and often wrapped in a red cloth bearing the same ornamentation.

[782] The altar is consecrated on those of the Komo, over which it is passed seven times. The throats of victims are cut, their blood is collected in a gourd, and the boli dipped into it three times before being taken out in the sun to dry.

Its role is one of protection. Its owner carries it during the Komo ceremonies to defend himself against spells, korti, which may be cast by someone in the audience.

It also maintains the integrity of its owner's forces. If the latter faints or goes into a trance, he is returned to his normal state by completely renewing the ingredients which constitute it. When the horn is emptied of its contents, "both the soul of the altar and that of the man" are removed. The container is rinsed out with water from the

778 Niger after which the reconstitution of the altar is carried on and is
794 equivalent to "the taking on a new soul." Each family member comes to the aid of the party concerned: the father gives copper, the women, peppers, the children, charcoal; a new cowrie is removed from Faro's granary.

778 The mbendyugukã (literally, I am on the enemy) is an individual
794 altar which permits its owner to overcome his adversaries and even to
754 attack their life.

The person who wishes to own one makes it after the death of an enemy. He goes secretly to unearth the corpse, shaves off its hair, cuts off its tongue and nails, and removes the eyes.

An elderly owner of such an altar takes it with him to the person who wishes to make one. The latter prepares and mixes the ingredients according to a special ritual and ties them to a hyena's tail. Before a witness who belongs to his age grade, the elder rubs the new altar on the old one seven times while reciting a prayer to consecrate it; he then returns it to its owner (1).

1. Because of its evil powers, the altar may not be made and entrusted to its owner except in the presence of a known witness.

The symbolism of the various parts composing it explain the use to which this altar will later be put. The tongue of the dead man contains his voice and gives to that of the owner the strength to convince those who contradict him in arguments as well as in council meetings. The eyes of the dead man permit him to see what others may not see, or even to blind his enemies by poisoning them with his nails. The hair, evidence of the other parts /134/ of the corpse, contains the nyama of the deceased and is an essential part of the mbendyugukã.

[595] The owner of this altar, which excludes the number four, marries only three wives. Moreover, he cannot mix his own hair with that of another without risking death.

[782] Because of its aggressive character, the mbendyugukã demands victims, dogs or roosters, of red coloring. It gives to whomever owns it a strength which will always be greater than that of his competitors in whatever he may undertake.

778 784 754 For this reason it receives sacrifices at the time when the fields are being worked, for trade, marriage, war, and hunting where the person risks his life; it helps to fight illness and death. Immediately after the first sacrifice, it captures the personality and aggressiveness of the dead man and puts them on its owner, making him doubly dangerous to those with whom he is in conflict. But on the other hand, the danger may turn against him and, to a greater extent than anyone else, he risks his life at the slightest broken taboo.

Furthermore, the Komo who disapproves of such operations may, if he considers it useful, loosen the dead man's nyama on the person who is using his spiritual forces and put him in danger of death. Thus a Bambara will hesitate a long time before owning such an altar; in fact very few individuals assume this heavy responsibility.

C. The Chief's Seat

778 622 In the courtyard of the home of a family head or village chief can be found a pile of wood stuck on the ground and called dyamana tigi jigi (literally, support of the owner of the world) (Fig. 11). This seat symbolizes at once the chief, his power, his social and religious role of supporting the group (1).

1. The seat described below was observed at Banankoroni in the courtyard of the village chief. A similar one is found at Soroba.

The pieces of bent wood which compose it are planted rather deep into the earth above a series of objects. One of these pieces, with a simple bend (in a) is called sinzin, support; the two others, shaped like a T, are called jigi ba jigi (in b) (literally, support of the big support).

FA8 766 The whole lies over the body of an albino (c) buried in a tomb having a ritual form, covered with ancient clothing dyed in wolo and speckled with small black spots made of /135/ bone ash (kolofin), which represent at the same time the embryo in the womb of women and Faro. The head is covered with the cap of primitive men (e).

In (d), three pickets, symbols of man, are stuck through the skin of the albino's forehead; this skin had been removed and seven ritual

622 778 scars symbolizing the person (three and four) are made on it. At the moment the skin is buried under the seat, the following prayer is recited:

"I have sworn in your names by striking on the siriku of Yamba by (burying) the skin from the right and left sides of the forehead; the skin from the forehead (seven times)" (1).

1. Tena wolo fla kini ani numa yamba

[532]

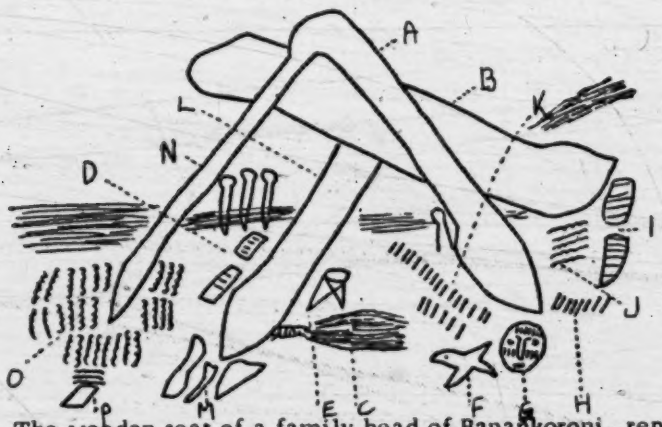

Fig. 11 — The wooden seat of a family head of Banankoroni, representing his joints. It is inserted into the ground in the courtyard above the bones of an albino, those of a child, and various symbolic objects. (Drawing by an informant.)

ka siriku nye di ka fo ani aw čua ye kena, tena wolo.

The prayer recalls here the acts of the fourth ancestor Yamba, who inaugurated the sacrifices of albinos to Faro, and his role as a chief beginning with this mythical period (see p. 46), a role which the present chief must fulfill with the same righteousness. The siriku is a small protective altar usually made from a hyena tail.

In (m) are placed the three principal bones of the albino; the two femurs and the right humerus, "so that the chief may have white

622 778 bones," that is to say, that he may live to be so old that his bones will be visible through his skin which is transparent.

In (n) the bent part of the wood, called kuntigi tigiya jigi (literally, /136/ support of the chief's deed), is planted over the hair of the previously shaved albino (in o) from which it takes its strength.

[801] In (k), twenty-two small sticks are the symbol of the number 22, representing "the ensemble of words received by the ancestor Koumabana who was never caught unawares by anyone." In depositing these sticks, the officiator expresses the wish that the chief may become unbeatable like the ancestor.

[801] In (h), eight small sticks of zekene wood (1) represent the eight

[824] 1. Balanites aegyptica. This bush, according to popular belief, grows over the tomb of a man who died "with rancor and bitterness, as did Koumabana."

ancestors; they signify that man must be, like Koumabana, master of words and that he must be "true to his word."

In (f), the bird tatugu kononi, master of fire, is buried. The prayer recited states that it must be able to penetrate into the earth and come out freely, for since mythical times it has played a decisive role in combats (2).

2. See p. 155. The chief, who is sometimes obligated to declare war, must be able to win it.

In (g) is buried the head of the first child to die in the chief's family, in order to recall the loss suffered and to avoid its recurrence. On the skull are marked the signs of the person: two times 3 and 7, or two times 4 and 7, depending upon the sex of the deceased. In (j) the hair is buried, a testimony to the misfortune and the loss which should be compensated for. In (e) is placed the skin of the forehead, divided into two pieces; the piece on the right signifies that Faro is free to give the child for as long as he chooses; on the piece on the left are engraved the eight signs of the word, recalling that Faro, master of the word, is also master of the destiny of the deceased, whose number has been reckoned among the dead. In (p) a small

622 178 of polished stone called fara yele, "stone that rejoices," expresses the wish that the chief's rule prosper.

The seat, taken as a whole, represents the chief's skeleton and his joints. It is erected upon various elements which sum up his ties to the ancestors and the supernatural powers, indicating his responsibility and contributing to the maintenance of his strength. It is situated in such a way that all the events in the courtyard take place around it, and that nothing which is said is out of earshot. As a center of the family household, as the symbol of the industrious and responsible man, it is the framework of the community which it upholds, just as the chief does through his physical endurance and moral firmness. The whole village "leans upon the chief's joint."

Each morning and evening, the ǰigi ba ǰigi and the ba ǰigi /137/ are greeted so that the chief may be strong, that his family may increase, that he may foster the ancestral beliefs. Offerings and [782] libations are made upon the seat and upon the body of the chief when his authority is questioned. In (b) tomato juice is being poured; in (a), representing the elbow or the knee, the water which has been used for ritual bathing of these same joints; at the foot, in (n), the fowls' throats are cut while the officiator, before pouring down the blood of the sacrifice, blows into a small hole dug in the ground; finally, in (l) the water which was used to wash the chief's whole body is poured in.

[826] In this way the chief's joints, which are the seat of his strength and his procreative seed, are purified and fortified.

II. Village Cults

794 The village, as a physical entity, and its inhabitants are placed under the protection of the supernatural powers and of the ancestors. Faro is directly invoked at all water spots.

If the village is situated at the river's edge, the rituals are addressed to the Faro tyin. If it is not too far from the bank, the inhabitants go out to make their offerings to the spirit. Frequently, the stream, pond, or natural well, which often determined the site chosen by the founders, is though to be inhabited by an incarnation of Faro whose name is revered and to whom all offer a cult.

On the other hand, each village is placed under the protection of the dasiri, a special spirit delegated by Faro.

194 The ancestors are worshipped in various places: at the doors and
769 thresholds of houses, at the cemetery, and at stone altars placed at
778 the intersections of lanes and in public squares. These positive cults, which are aimed at the acquisition of beneficial forces, have as a counterpart, cults in which the villagers rid themselves of all their unlucky and infectious elements; these take place, in particular, at the corssroads, dangu, which are placed under the guardianship of the earth Soba spirits.

It would be impossible to treat all of the cults of the Bambara villages. Among these, three have caught our attention; they concern the dasiri, the dangu, and the ancestral altar stones.

A. The dasiri

194 The word dasiri (literally, which binds the mouth) designates the
776 invisible spirit, Faro's representative entrusted with watching over
778 /138/ the village, as well as the seat of this spirit and, sometimes too, the animal which accompanies it or symbolizes it.

The spirit haunts a rock, a thicket, or a tree situated near the village; the approaches to this spot are reserved for the elder in charge of the ritual (1).

[824] 1. In Massala and Soroba it is a baobab tree; in Sama, a tamarind tree, etc. See the observations on the dasiri collected by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné /Monograph of Djenne/, pp. 137-138; L. Tauxier. La Religion Bambara, pp. 195-208.

[787 361] Generally the place is pointed out by the geomancer at the time the village is founded, or else determined by an event which occurred at that time. It is after this operation that the buildings are erected to the west of the chosen spot.

If the dasiri is a tree, no one may burn or cut its branches. In [822] many cases it cannot be approached by anyone dressed in black or indigo, colors which represent obscurity. No Peul may sit in its [563] shade (2). Any infraction of these taboos brings about the death of

2. The reasons for the taboo concerning the Peul have not yet been ascertained.

794 776 778 [563]

In some villages, the sacrificer never consumes butter or milk, foods which the Peul furnish the Bambara.

the culprit and deprives the villagers of their protector.

794 776 825 The spirit of the dasiri sometimes has as its compansion an animal which seems to represent the group's ancestor. At Ségou, it is a crocodile; at Ouélenguena, a she-ass; at Koulikoro, a monkey; in other places it is a male goat which is replaced when it dies. At Konodimini there are a series of deep intercommunicating wells which would have served as homes for the ancestors. These holes are at present occupied by hyenas which are considered to be incarnations of the blacksmiths of former times and which are the dasiri of the place.

The dasiri's animal is free to enter homes and to eat what it finds. It is often fed by the inhabitants. No one may attack it and whoever breaks this taboo, set on by a vengeful nyama of which he cannot [582 626] rid himself, risks being forbidden to marry, even being no longer tolerated in his native village (1).

1. This was, at Soroba, the case of Dji Diara, who, after killing a hyena, could not marry as no woman was willing to link her destiny to his.

794 776 782 As its name indicates, the function of the dasiri is to maintain the stability and integrity of the village. It is the "support of the inhabitants' lives"; the numerous rituals (individual or collective), of which it is the object, reveal the importance of its role as well as the diversity of the beings invoked. To Faro are addressed prayers for rain; to the ancestors prayers for questions /139/ concerning the family; and to the spirit of the tree when it is a matter of stopping an epidemic. But directly or indirectly, any sacrifice offered to the dasiri is offered to Faro. The victims (sheep or fowl) and the offerings (cotton bands, kola nuts) are always white (see Pl. 3, b).

794 778 852 When children reach the age of six or seven, they are led to the tree; they sit on its roots upon which kola nut juice is spat, and are, by this fact, introduced into the village cult. They are then presented to all the allies senânku and especially to the blacksmiths with whom they proceed to joke.

794 Each year a sacrifice bringing together all the inhabitants is offered
776 to the dasiri and is terminated by communal eating of the sacrificial
782 victim. The first fruits of the harvest are also brought to it by the sacrificer.

B. The dangu

776 The crossroads dangu or danku (literally, boundary of the head) are
778 inhabited by the Soba spirits who, under Faro, constantly intervene
823 in human affairs. Everything placed at this spot belongs to them,
783 and no one passes by without leaving an offering or a token of his presence: a tool, raw cotton, seeds, cloth. A travelling stranger kneels and deposits a little ash or some cotton; if not, he cleans off a little space on which he spits before leaving. A child passing by will greet it with these words: "Crossroads, my soul is in your hands." On the occasion of any event concerning the individual, the family, or the community, red kola nuts are placed at the crossroads and the following words uttered: "You, crossroads, I entrust my head to you; you are my support; I say, you, crossroads" (1).

1. E dangu m be ni ku kalifa, do i la ni jigi be fe, ngo e dangu.

The corssroad, as an ideal public thoroughfare, is the chosen spot where one easily rids oneself of the nyama which any individual keeps and carries about with him. All that is impure, unlucky, and undesirable for the individual or the community is left at the crossroads. Objects which have belonged to dead people are also left there. The forces which are thus gotten rid of are supposedly absorbed by the spirits for whom they constitute a kind of nourishment which will then be returned to men in the form of gifts free of any taint.(2)

2. See p. 258.

/140/ Several examples will illustrate the role played by the crossroads in the community:

Any man who has wounded an animal or squashed an insect is affected in his own tere by that of the victim. He goes to the crossroads, kneels, and prays, depositing at the same time a band of cotton, an egg, and ashes. The band of woven cotton, symbol of

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the word, is offered as clothing, and the eggs are offered as purification. As for the ashes, it is the ideal pure element since fire has "removed" its tere from the wood; here it represents the man from whom "the bad force acting on his tere has been removed" (1). Whoever murders an

1. See pp. 90 ff.

animal proceeds in the samw way with the animal's hide upon which he throws cowrie shells. In both cases, the spirits absorb the tere and nyama, which add to their own forces and free the culprit.

Collective purifications are carried out on the dangu when sexual taboos regarding cultivated fields and bush are broken. The impurity [833] resulting from copulation performed outdoors is communicated to all the land belonging to the village; the trees in the bush will no longer bear fruit; the harvests will deteriorate. Formerly the two lovers [684] taken by surprise were deprived of their clothing which was burned on the dangu after they had circled the village three times starting at the left. The culprits were then banished. At present, if the plight of the fields suggests that such an act has been committed, all varieties of cultivated seeds are gathered in a basket which is placed at the cross-roads. Then, all the villagers and their domestic animals circle the village three times while sham battles take place between men mounted on horseback. After a sacrifice offered at the dangu, the seeds, thus purified, are sown.

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Offerings are made to the spirits of the crossroads at the time of sowing to invoke their protection. This ritual is obligatory for whomever sows cotton, since this seed was given to men by these spirits. The farmer places the seeds, sits down facing west, and cries out three times the name of the dangu above the seeds. He leaves three small piles in homage to the spirit along with fibers from the plant, and kills a victim before proceeding to sow his field. When the stalks are up, he cuts some boughs and returns to the place of sacrifice to sweep up the seeds, thus impregnating them with the nyama of the dangu. He then dries them, grinds, sifts, and mixes them with earth picked up on the same spot. In his field, he shouts /141/ the name of the dangu and throws the mixture with all his strength in the direction of the cardinal points, the zenith, and the ground. When the plants are mature he picks the first seven ripe seeds, brings them to the same place, and offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

776 It is also at the crossroads that the elders place the child whose
778 legitimacy is in doubt. If the diviner who is then consulted declares
823 that the child is a bastard, he is deprived of the protection of the spirits
848 and is supposedly unable to survive the nyama which he has acquired
787 at the place. In this same spot are buried abnormal children, in par-
[766] ticular hydrocephalics who are considered undesirable. The spindle of a dead woman is placed here along with the broom she habitually used.

776 But the ritual most characteristic of the crossroads is the one re-
778 sorted to by the village when it is in trouble: the primitive wooden
823 mallet, gosilande is planted in the ground; it is then struck with a
783 stalk of millet to chase away evil and to induce new techniques of reparation to come out of the instrument (1).

1. See p. 145.

C. Stone Altars

778 In the villages, at the intersections of lanes, and in the squares,
211 the founding ancestors are represented by stones under which various objects are buried (see Pl. V, b).

At Sama, four large stones, encased in a clay platform, symbolize both the cardinal points and the ancestors. They are in touch with the dasiri and receive the same offerings. At Banankoroni, the fara ba is partly buried. Under its point is an albino skull which represents those of the first ancestors and their bones. Two hoes, one placed near the right ear and the other near the left ear, convey the idea that "the man who cultivates the earth will never hear a humiliating word." Under the chin, another hoe recalls that the villagers who are faithful to agriculture will never know famine. Under the hoe, a siriku (2) protects them against those who try to harm them, and brings them

2. See p. 179, n. 1.

"the hyena's luck"; it also means that some of their ancestors were transformed into hyenas in former times. A circumcision knife recalls that all males are circumcised, and all women excised (Fig. 15). Finally, three albino bones and a small pile of copper are a testimony to /142/ Faro's presence and power. Drawings are made on these

778 stones at the time of the collective ceremonies called the years
211 "renewal" (1).

1. See pp. ff.

III. The Religious Societies

794 Members of groups formed by families in a broad sense, headed by patriarchs and owning lands which cannot be divided, also belong to other collective groups called flâ; these are formed by the age grade of circumcision, excision, or initiation, and grouped around altars which are their own and which possess their special rituals.

These societies are called by the general term dyo (2) meaning

476 2. It is appropriate to distinguish the religious societies, dyo, described in this work, from the mutual aid societies, tõ, of apparently secular character. The latter are also very numerous and exist in all the Bambara villages.

These organizations are strongly hierarchical and are placed under the direction of responsible chiefs. Their members perform communal work which concerns the life of the village: felling trees, clearing, cultivation of individual or communal fields, house construction, etc., and participation in marriage ceremonies. The detailed study of the tõ whose role is considerable would be indispensable to an understanding of the social and economic organization of this tribe.

The participation of the tõ in agricultural work will be described by Mme. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture (in press).

794 "to build, "to edify" and also "secret." This term recalls that each individual constitutes an element of the whole group formed by the society.

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B. Altars of the Komo

The boli altars occupy a distinguished place in the religious and mythological representations of the society organized around them. On the one hand they are a capsule of the universe because of their composition; on the other they are a capsule of the society as all its members are present in them. In fact, each member has provided a part of the composing elements after having impregnated them with his person by salivating over them while pronouncing his name.

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The altars of the Komo are kept in a sanctuary, the komo so (literally, house of the Komo), a medium sized hut built either in the chief's dwelling place, or in the bush at some distance from the village. The approach to this structure which is under Faro's protection is forbidden to the ordinary person. The chief himself never enters alone. It is said that a snake, the soul and guardian of the sanctuary, is born and lives at the top of the hut in the branches which form the roof (Pl. VI, a).

The hut is divided into a number of floors on each of which is placed /146/ an altar. The highest one contains at its center the nimara boli (literally, altar of the souls) which, as its name indicates, is the container of the souls belonging to deceased members of the society and to sacrificed animals (1). It contains, from top to bottom,

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1. There is constant preoccupation with preserving all vital elements. The souls of sacrificed animals are the object of the same care as those of humans. Like them, they participate in the resurrection promised to everything which has lived.

hair of the dead, copper for the souls of animals, gold for those of men. These various ingredients, placed in a double sac, receive the sacrificial blood which runs between the two layers and soaks them.

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The nimara boli is surrounded by small individual altars which have served to channel the souls of the dying and lead them to the common receptacle (2). These small boli remain in the hut only

2. See p. 175.

194 during the seven days following the death and are returned to the heir
178 of the deceased (son or brother); they remain permanently in the sanctuary only if the dead man has no descendants. They are held up by two wooden stakes called čin ta bere (literally, sticks which collect inheritance) which keep the souls of the dead and which contain at the top wood dust from Makanta Djigui's canoe and gold at the bottom. These stakes feed the boli which they hold and the souls of the dead which they contain, thus demonstrating that the "Komo never abandons anyone and that men without descendants remain with it for ever."

[184] The taboos concerning the nimara boli are numerous and strict: it may not be removed from the sanctuary except for funerals (1). No

1. See p. 247.

woman must ever see it. No foreign cult could ever conceivably be celebrated in its presence.

On the second floor is located the n̄ȭ boli (literally, altar of millet) which contains an invigorating power intended for the society's crops. It is composed of a sac divided into six pockets which contain (from top to bottom) at the left: small millet, fonio, and copper; at the right: large millet, rice and other cereals, and gold. The sac, which opens at the top, receives at the time of agricultural ceremonies (sowing and harvest) the blood of victims offered by members of the millet society, n̄õtȭ. It must always remain damp with sacrificial blood so that the seeds which it contains will always live.

The n̄ȭ boli is also tied to two stakes called n̄ȭ boli kane (literally, protection of the n̄ȭ boli) which contain in a hollowed-out /147/ section some millet and gold; it is tied to the stakes by threads which bring it the forces they contain.

The n̄ȭ boli watches over the growth of cereals: germination, formation of the ears, maturation. It is responsible for the "head of millet" (2).

2. Each farmer is the owner of an individual n̄ȭ boli which is placed in a subordinate position under that of the Komo. In addition, the Komo's n̄ȭ boli is in close touch with the n̄ȭ boli of the Kworè, a society whose purpose is to obtain

194 778 the rain necessary for cultivation (see p. 217). The agricultural role of the Komo will be described by S. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture.

194 778 784 The main taboo of the ñõ boli is the loss or waste of food. If even a grain of cereal drops to the ground, or into the fire, the members of the millet society are responsible for picking it up and eating it; otherwise the Komo will punish for the failure to do so and the harvest suffers.

194 778 726 The third floor contains the nyama boli, a repository of the forces (nyama) of individuals who have died a violent death (murder, war, execution). The nyama boli used to contain in former times a stone called gõgoro kurubé, considered to be the "mother" of the stones thrown by the warriors' sling. It was removed from the sac in case of war and carried to the battlefield by a twin walking at the head of the troops. On its surface were engraved a series of lines representing the king, the warriors, and their wives. It gathered all the souls of those dead in combat and received their blood as an offering.

194 778 The nyama boli is, moreover, responsible for the soul of the crops and a repository for the souls of sacrificed animals; it also receives the "nyama of the words" of the members. It shares with the ñõ boli the responsibility for the cultivations and confers in this way great power to the society.

The sac contains in its lower part a mixture of coagulated blood and gold, and in its upper part a mixture of charcoal powder, pepper, and honey, which gives power to the nyama with which the sac is loaded. The taboo of the nyama boli is the rapid death of victims [782] which are sacrificed to it; only slow death confers effective nyama.

Upon the ground of the sanctuary, along with the dance costume of the mask, nya, are placed small altars intended either for sale, or for the creation of the new Komo, or for individual purposes. Animal horns, both byẽ ba (literally, big horn) and byẽ ni (literally, little horn), are also placed there; they contain powder for ritual usage, korti, whose dangerous action takes place during the times the mask is taken out (1).

1. The various mixtures used for the religious practices of the Bambara

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often contain ingredients which have been pulverized: wood dust, charcoal powder, even powder of precious metals. Our investigation has not yet allowed us to clarify the role of this pulverization process. However, its mention by the Bambara and the frequent use of korti indicate the importance attached to this type of preparation.

/148/ Outside the hut, at the height of the nyama boli, a hook holds up the clothes of those who are killed by the Komo. The sanctuary, as well as the clothing of the mask, is daubed with black earth taken on the shore of the river representing Faro, and covered with feathers of the same color. Generally speaking, the metal [823] contained in the Komo altars gives it its strength and life. The most powerful of these is gold, silver comes next, then copper. Since each person gives an offering according to his means, the power of the altar thus depends in a certain measure on the wealth of the members of the society.

[782] Regular sacrifices upon the stakes, the bases of which sometimes contain a little wood from the historic canoe of Makanta Djigui, permit them to "maintain the pressure, the life" in the various altars.

These altars are removed from the sanctuary only upon the occasion of funerals or agricultural rites. When the mask is removed and when there are dances, replicas commonly found in the home of the chief are sometimes used instead.

The pembele is the protector of the society, the container of the forces (nyama) of the group. It is rarely placed in the sanctuary and usually kept by the chief who never exhibits it; occasionally it is watered with rain water symbolizing the work of creation.

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Before the annual ceremony called "anniversary of the Komo," drawings are made on the sanctuary by the chief or an elder; they are a reminder that the sanctuary is the link between the invisible powers and the members of the society. Besides the image of creation as an issue of the initial vibration (see Fig. 2), the head of the ancestor Koumabana, figurations of the twins, and the twenty-two fundamental signs are sometimes drawn. Finally hoes emphasize the agricultural function of the Komo (1). Granaries intended for conserving grains

1. At the time when the attention of specialists is attracted by the division of

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religious and social powers in ancient societies, it is interesting to point out that the Komo altars represent a very definite three-way division: the first is used for the conservation of spiritual forces (souls) of the group; the second presides exclusively over agricultural rites; the third is concerned with keeping the spiritual principles of individuals who died violently and of crop seeds; it played an important role during the wars. This threefold division is comparable on many points to that observed by M. Dumezil in Indo-European societies.

from the first crops /149/ used as offerings, are placed next to the sanctuaries or in the home of the chief (1).

1. In the village of Soroba the sanctuary includes seven granaries: three for small millet, sanŋ; four for large millet, keninge. Seven is the number symbolic of the person, three for masculinity (small millet is male) and four for femininity (large millet is female).

C. The Mask

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The man who wears the mask during the ceremonies personifies the Komo. The head is sculptured in the shape of a human face or animal face. At Konodimini, it represents the panther; at Soungoba, a stork; at Banankoroni, an eagle; at Banoumbougoula, an elephant; at Ségoubougou, a vulture. The mask is usually decorated with elements borrowed from several animals. Thus, at Soroba, the skull and horns are those of a buffalo, but the jaw is that of a crocodile. It is, moreover, ornamented with the feathers of a wild duck (2).

2. An informant, who attended Komo ceremonies in a great number of villages, asserted he had never seen the same mask twice.

1: Dieterlen--210a E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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a) Tree of the Ndomo, at the center of the uncultivated square (Soroba).

Plate V

b) Stone altar (Banankoroni).

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a) Hut of the Komo (Konodimini).

Plate VI

b) Holes for refuse (Banankoroni).

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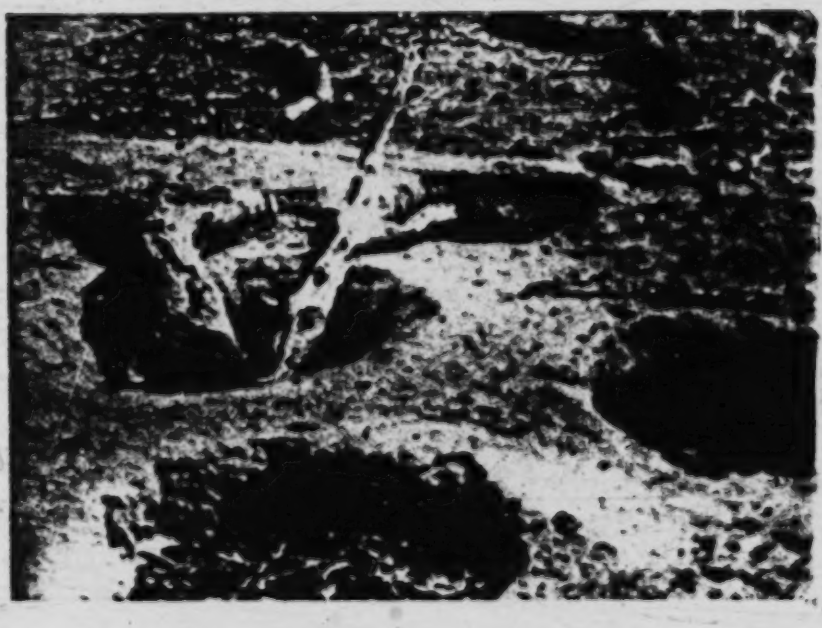

/166/ The Kworę

794 The Kworè society, kworę dye (literally, reunion of the Kworè) consists of individuals around the altars (kworę boli) on which rites are performed concerning the skies, space, the cardinal points, the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, and particularly rain. Kworè literally means "dried up pond."

The rituals are intended for the Kworè spirits who depend upon Faro and who live in the kaba fĭn (third sky). They are in charge of watching over the rains sent from the wolofla kaba (seventh sky), which cross the other skies and "the void" before reaching the earth. The spirits struggle in the skies and in space against the mahalakillen of the koblenkaba (fifth sky) who try to stop the water. Lightning, thunder, and thunderbolt are the effects of these struggles.

794 The principal ceremonies take place around a tree, called kworę 118 ǰigi, which is situated to the east of the village and is the usual habitation of the spirits when they descend to receive men's offerings. The altars are placed in a hut built in the bush; other samples of these are kept in the chief's residence. A large stone, kworę fara, located near the village and placed in the ground above some symbolic objects, also receives offerings. The Kworè society is the owner of a communally cultivated field, in which small millet, sañõ, is exclusively sown and the harvest of which is kept for the needs of the cult.

A chief, the kworę tigi, is entrusted with the care of the altars and performance of the ritual.

A. The Altars

The altars of the kworę are placed in a sanctuary called buku sãmpere ni (literally, little hut of thunder) and situated at a certain distance from the village because of the dangers from lightning. The door is low and very narrow so that the forces held within may not escape.

The altars are composed of the following objects:

1. A large sac of the skin of a male goat, kworę boli sãmpere, open at its upper extremity and suspended by a boa skin (miñã) which symbolizes lightning. This sac, which has three compartments, contains copper, water from the Niger, rain water, and the "thunder stones" of the society. The "thunder stones," sãmpereni or sãmpere

dyele, play an essential role /167/ in the rain cult among the Bambara as among the other blacks of the Sudan. They supposedly fall from the sky with lightning bolts (1).

1. They are picked up at the spot where they fall and are the object of an important trade.

At the time when a Kworé society is being founded, the chief, generally accompanied by the komotigi, visits villages where lightning has struck in order to buy stones and to choose them with a knowledge of the case. Each member contributes to the purchase of one stone.

2. Another sac also made of the skin of a male goat, called n̄õ boli (boli of millet), is suspended from the roof by a serpent skin. This altar is dependent upon the n̄õ boli of the Komo, which presides over germination. It contains small millet from the fields of the Kworé and some of the small millet from the n̄õ boli of the Komo.

3. A sac containing water from the last rain, called ngule s̄ãndyi.

4. A sac made of the bladder of an ox, jettemine boli, makes it possible to see the water level from the outside. After each rainfall the level is checked by the chief and the water is poured into the ngule s̄ãndyi where it is kept throughout the year.

5. A sac containing thunder stones intended for sale:
   (a) To be suspended from roof to counteract lightning.
   (b) To attract lightning; in this case the stone is placed under a shelter in the bush.
   (c) To make a new kworé boli.

This sac is the object of libations consisting of rain water drawn from the ngule s̄ãndyi, to which has been added a pulverized thunder stone.

6. An axe called s̄ãmpere dyele koro (literally, old thunder axe) of an ancient shape, made of a hewn stone set in a wooden handle. Considered as the "mother of the thunder stones," it is not removed from the altar until the very last when the rites for rain have failed.

Pieces of mirror brought by members of the society are set into the wall; the reflections from these mirrors also are supposed to affect rainfall.

794 B. In the chief's residence, there are replicas of the axe and the
778 altars. According to the needs, they are transported to the shore of the Niger, into the fields, or to the public square during the ceremonies. The originals, on the other hand, remain sheltered from the looks of outsiders and risks of impurity. Moreover, the chief owns a special altar, the kworę ni, "soul of the kworę," /168/ which contains the spiritual principles of the members who do not belong to the Komo society. The kworę ni is placed upon the chest of a dying man and receives his soul at the moment of death as does the nimara boli of the Komo (1). It is regularly saturated with rainwater.

C. The stone of the kworę, of which the lower part is crudely carved into seven teeth called kworę fara ni, is stuck into the ground after the following objects have been buried in this site. (See Fig. 13)

1. Three thunder stones called: fara ba, "big stone"; /169/ fara bye, "stone point"; fara joli, "blood of stone." These recall the presence of Faro's power, rain, under the altar. When placing them, the following words are repeated seven times: "Help us" (1)!

1. A ka demme.

2. Three whips, the male number, testimony to the course of men who withstand the pain of the strokes without complaining. When they are buried the following words are spoken: "Let us be courageous" (2).

2. A ka farina.

3. A kongobwona axe (see p. 160) which recalls the ancestors' victory over famine; it announces harvests and future wealth.

Drawings are made on the stone during the annual ceremony. In the center, a black dot called faro dẽzo, "womb of Faro," represents the spirit. It is framed by two series of three whips, each "to defend him," as well as by the first three of the eight ancestors (one of which was Koumabana) and by seven figures representing the members.

[184] Woman is the taboo of the Kworè. Only males may approach the sanctuary and the altars. Any circumcised male desiring to participate
794 in the ceremonies must be initiated. The postulants are brought
785 together by the chief under the Kworè tree, at the foot of which a fire is lit; each carries a twig of fiuãna wood. They suffer

uncomplainingly the burns inflicted upon them with a torch and they whip themselves vigorously. The chief next teaches them the role of the Kworè spirits, the rituals celebrating them, and the symbolic value of the objects of the cult.

Some of the members are designated to take the role of kworę duga during the ceremonies. Masked and waving freshly cut branches in each hand, they mount a wooden horse, the kworęduga so (1). Thus

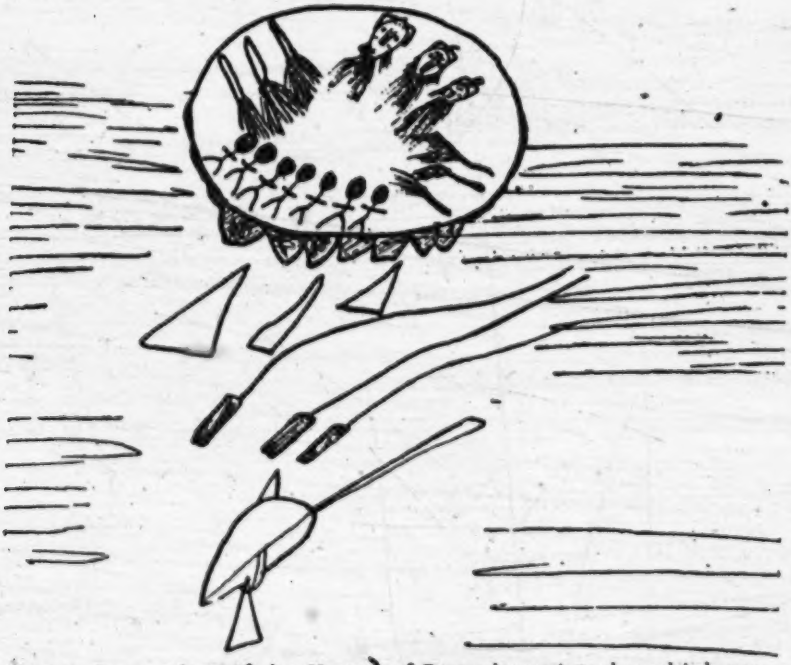

Fig. 13 —Stone altar of the Kworè of Banankoroni under which are buried three neolithic axes, three whips, the ritual iron axe, kongobwona. The drawing, made in the course of the annual ceremony, represents the first three of the eight ancestors who received the word, the members of the society, and the Kworè whips; the black spot is the "womb of Faro." (Drawing by an informant)

1. The kworę duga (literally, vulture of the Kworè), also called togoro koya, "jesters," are as their name indicates, jesters who have the right to joke about

instruction and initiation. Five years are thus necessary to reach the highest rank. Each promotion is paid for by the individual providing two roosters whose throats are cut upon the altars at the end of the annual ceremony which takes place in the bush under a tree called the kalabana, following communally performed labor. After meal, a fight called bari, organized under the direction of the chiefs, puts the young boys in opposite groups and gives them the opportunity to show their courage and their initiative.

The members' activity consists of collective work at the time of the cultivation. The millet and the gifts in kind received in payment for the work are owned communally.

A. Material Objects of the Cult.

The society is the owner of ritual objects such as a mask and whips which are usually placed in a hut, ndomo buku, at some distance from the village.

The objects, numbering five, are rudimentary musical instruments. The wara, the clawed one, or diara, the lion, is a wooden bull-roarer approximately 35 centimeters in length, which is manipulated by means of a string a meter long. Sometimes the object is of iron and of smaller dimensions. The tori, toad, is a small box which gives off a nasal sound when it is scratched. The kono, bird, is made of two pieces of gourd bound together by spider webs. The wulu, dog, is a small calabash of about 10 centimeters in diameter, punctured by four holes. A string, threaded through its neck, allows it to be rotated like a rhombos. The jineble (literally, red spirit) is a buffalo horn pierced by three holes, /172/ obstructed by spider webs, into which one blows and which produce a loud, flute-like sound. One society usually owns several specimens of each of these instruments.

The mask, said to be the most ancient object, is of sculptured wood representing a human face crowned by several vertical, rather long horns (1). The whole is completely decorated with cowrie shells and

1. The masks most often carry eight horns, but this rule is not always respected.

red kise (2), grains which represent the blood from the offerings. The

2. Linociera sudarica.

794 778 532 high forehead, black and always smeared with karite butter, confers upon the face a beneficial power. The whole mask is regularly rubbed with ground charcoal powder and with the juice of the kola nut.

794 778 The whips of the mask (ndomo busa) are made of ñuana branches famous for their suppleness. They are made at the time of the annual ceremony and only renewed the following year. At the time of their manufacture, they are soaked in water, which the members of the society then drink "in order not to have to suffer from the blows which they will receive."

[84] Each member also possesses a long whip made of the branches of a bush, the ngere ni, (1) which is also called "tree of Faro" for it

1. Hibiscus pandoriformia.

grows in water, and which contains part of the beneficial power of the spirit. The whip is used to try out the children's courage. The one who cries or complains will carry this handicap with him through life; even after his circumcision he will be referred to as a coward.

B. Initiation

794 526 Each new grade is acquired in the course of the annual ceremony which takes place after the harvest. An elder entrusted with the sacrifices cuts the throats of the roosters offered by the postulants over the tree of the ndomo (Pl. V, a) and over the ritual objects placed at his feet, and then pours boiled millet as an offering. During this time the young people plow the ground where the contest, bari (2), is to take place; this fight will pit them against each other

2. To make oneself fall, the joust.

and give them the opportunity to show their courage and competitive spirit.

The chief designates the fighters two by two who are watched over /173/ by the dyolokotigi. In the contest, during which any use of legs or feet disqualifies the fighter, the one who makes his adversary fall three consecutive times is chosen to be initiated into a higher grade on the following night. After this contest, the losers must bring two additional roosters if they also wish to be initiated. Then a meal eaten in common brings together the members of the society and the postulants.

764 were kept by the village patriarch and the cult of the ancestors was celebrated upon these altars.

At the present time, the body is buried during rites in which the Komo plays an important role for the initiates. As soon as a member 763 is seriously ill, the family head places upon the dying man's chest 778 the portable altar, kere la boli ni, which belongs to the community. He does not leave the bedside in order to catch the last breath. Immediately after death, without turning back or saying a word to anyone, he goes to the chief of the Komo who places the object in the [775] sanctuary where the altars are kept. The soul is introduced into the nimara boli (1).

[843]

1. See p. 192. In former times, the soul of the dead man was caught between two gourds which were then joined together and hung on the conjugal bed. When the woman became pregnant, the gourds were broken over her abdomen in order to make the soul penetrate the foetus. Later on this method of transmission of the soul was no longer possible because of the impurity brought about by "frivolous discussions regarding the arrangements and situations of creation."

764 Upon his return to the house of the deceased, the family head brushes his hand over the dead man's face to gather his nyama which he then entrusts to Pemba by rubbing the cavity in the family pembele "so that the total of the work he has accomplished during his life will not be dissolved by death, but will be like /190/ an accumulated force serving the community, and so that his intelligence, his qualities, and his skill in different kinds of work, especially in agriculture, will not be lost but will be found in other members of the family. The [778] block of wood, acting as an altar for storing the forces, preserves this nyama until a new birth occurs in the family" (2).

2. S. De Ganay, "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara," p. 199.

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787 attend his burial despite the fact that the rituals have not been performed. If not, he is abandoned to the care of his family.

764 To neglect the rituals assuring life in the beyond and the security
775 of the living causes the shadow su dya, or the ghost su kere dye (literally, white side of the dead man), to arise and present itself under the same which the dead man had on earth, to claim his due from his descendants.

Ancestor Cult

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778 In the entryway of some residences a supporting stake (cɛ̌ dloma), sometimes marked by seven notches, represents the founding ancestor of the family. On the anniversary of his death the stake is oiled "to refresh his soul." In addition, each year the owner of the house sacrifices to all the ancestors on the family altar, on the stake, and on the threshold of the door. In some villages the ancestors are called upon by tapping the threshold with a little wooden hammer, dyele kala ni, which represents them.

In the courtyards, pieces of wood stuck in the ground (jigi semen dloma) represent the paternal uncle, the brother of the founder, and are used as seats for the heads of families who lean against them "in order to lean well upon the traditions." Farmers, before leaving for the fields, rub their hoes on them to show them to the ancestors.

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241 Before planting the women give the head of the family a ball of raw millet, which he lines up to represent the dead according to age and rank. Then he gives them a pinch of the seed beginning with the one representing the most recent deceased and calling successively all the dead by name. The paste and the seeds are then put in water and the mash thus obtained is poured on the /196/ doorposts to the entryway of the family house upon which the blood of a sacrificial victim also is poured. When the planting time comes, the chief who has prepared the mash made with a few grains taken from the seeds distributes this to the women, beginning with the one who represents the oldest deceased. He asks the ancestors to watch over, during the germination period, the soul of the millet which will descend into the seed with the first rainfall. When the millet has reached maturity, the first seeds harvested are placed in a pot on the threshing floor where the grain will be threshed later, and are distributed to the women in the same manner as the time of planting, the oldest of the deceased having to receive the first of the seed.

766 532 After the burial,[1] a drawing is made on the sanctuary with millet mash made of grain from Faro's field; this drawing represents the dead man and the mutilations inflicted upon him. The seven attending elders close their eyes as a sign of respect in order not to "register a drawing made for Faro." In fact, its aim is to obtain the spirit's pity and to ask him to include the dead among the count he keeps of his [769] subjects. It is also in front of this drawing that the family will come to make an offering and mourn every week.

II. Rituals of the Refuse

364 778 The debris, sweepings, and refuse collected in the homes, courtyards, public squares, and crossroads all contain forces which men have communicated to them.

The rituals, of which these are the objects and which vary according to their origin, have as their aim the offering of these forces to Faro who returns them to men purified and regenerated in the form of rainwater with which he irrigates the fields and in the form of ponds and wells. They are thus redistributed and used again for the benefit of the community.

The refuse at the crossroads, called dangu kalaw, stalks or straw of the dangu, contains the force, nyama, of all the beings that have trampled it.

/202/ The refuse from the homes contains the wanzo of the uncircumcised, the nyama which the inhabitants have to bear for having killed animals or insects and for having received insults, and their good or bad tere. These forces, called wanzo dla (literally, to arrange the wanzo) (1) or nyama dla, constantly come to the aid of all the

1. This term is applied to them particularly in houses where there are many children.

members of the family; they improve the wanzo of the uncircumcised, facilitate the women's childbirth, and renew the vigor of the old men. A small altar, konye, kept in the room reserved for the head of the family, is dedicated to them.

After the coming out of the Komo, the sweepings gathered on the spot where the dances take place contain the forces of the members.

[1] [Of a drowned person — Analyst]

364 778 782 (a) Household refuse, collected individually, is placed in separate piles inside shallow circular excavations dug out at the approaches to the villages (see Pl. VI, b). Among wealthy people a goat is sacrificed each week by having its throat cut above the pile on which the altar is temporarily placed. The sacrifice effects a double exchange: the blood nourishes the altar while at the same time it brings about the transfer into the altar of the forces contained in the refuse.

364 778 796 Every two months and seven days, at the decision of the village chief, these individual rubbish piles are removed from the holes. Each person burns his own pile and inhales the smoke. The ashes are deposited on the river bank, dampened so that the wind does not blow them away, and abandoned during seven days, a period during which Faro "comes to visit them and to bless them."

On the eighth day, after a meeting at the chief's residence, the villagers gather at the crossroads to burn the collective refuse piles, to collect the ashes, and to transport them, accompanied by the rhythm wanzo foli beaten on the drums, to the river bank where they will join those of the individual heaps.

After a sacrifice offered upon the konye altars of the participants, the griot of the Komo is struck by the nyama boli until he goes into a trance and flings himself into the water without saying a word. All must throw their ashes in after him before he comes out again. At that moment the spittles of the man who flutters about in the water are collected as a gift from Faro in exchange for the refuse which has been thrown in. Each person rubs his hands and feet with the saliva and upon returning, which is done in silence, impregnates the threshold of his home with it as evidence of the sacrifice so that Faro "might recognize his own and protect their life."

/203/ The following Thursday the people gather to dance according to the rhythms appropriate to each sex and generation. In the evening, each person places his foot on the site of the refuse heap; then all gather at the crossroads to offer the Soba spirit some millet, cotton, and kola nuts. The ceremony ends with a meeting at the chief's residence where he gives advice and encourages each one to respect tradition and to honor the ancestors and the protecting spirits.

(b) After the comings out of the Komo, the refuse is swept up and deposited in front of the sanctuary. Each participant leaps over the pile three times to communicate his nyama to it. In the evening the masker circles and whistles around the heap on which fire is lit while

364 778 796 the chief throws dust three times to the four cardinal points. The masker then stands in the wind in such a way as to receive the smoke; the chief and the members crouch in line behind him with their mouths open to inhale better. When the wind changes its direction they all move to continue this fumigation, wusuli, which constitutes a purification as well as an increment of forces. At the moment the fire is almost out, the most courageous of the participants stamps on it in order to assimilate better the nyama which it exudes. The ashes, [804] gathered by the chief, are distributed, the unit of measurement being the gourd mure. An important share goes to the nyama boli, another is given as an offering to Faro, and a third is distributed among the members.

Several days later, the group goes to the river bank to the sound of drums beating out the murumuruw foli (literally, rhythm of the refuse); they throw the ashes reserved for Faro into the water and, continuing to dance, return to the village.

364 778 252 Those ashes given to the members are used to prepare the potass which is mixed into the millet cake, the daily food of the Bambara, and which will make the members of the family share in the powers contained in the nyamanto.

364 778 The eating of this mixture closes the cycle of the transfer of forces, which were temporarily communicated to the refuse by the individuals, then recovered by Faro, and finally redistributed to the social body.

III. Rain Rites

789 241 At the time the first work is done in the fields, a drawing is made with millet mash upon the tree of the Kworè in the shape of a lozenge inscribed within a rectangle, which represents "the great fire which issued /204/ from the cardinal angles" at the time of their creation. While this is being done, the following words are spoken: "The four elbows (the lozenge) are the fire of the angles; here is the anniversary of the Kworè." The clearing of the field or the first plowing always symbolizes the very first clearing obtained through fire.

789 796 794 During the month of May, the members of the Kworè society make sacrifices upon their altars before the first rumbling of thunder in order to purify the first sky where clouds are formed from the impure passage of Mousso Koroni. The chief gathers the members about the tree and recites the following prayer:

*173
175 came, everyone was astounded to see him leave everything for the birds.

The oracle was fulfilled at once. Biton ruled from Timbuktu to the Atlantic. And the dyeli, Karé Tammoura, who told me the legend, adds that thereafter there was a very strange thing at Ségou: a combination animal and plant which the Bambara called Sanu-so or "golden horse." Ahmadou, the son of Omar, had a mosque erected on the spot where Sanu-so was wont to appear but, all the same, it did not disappear until the arrival of the French. Even since then, there are those who say that on certain days strange lights appear at the spot on the Niger where Monseigneur Hacquart died and where the genie appeared to Mamari.

[171] This fable about a local genie is not in itself remarkable, but when compared to the legend about Ngolo Dyara (see later, p. 51) and to many other similar ones current in the Sudan (2),

2. See, especially, the legend of Ndyadyane Ndyaye in "Légendes et coutumes sénégalaises [Senegalese Legends and Customs] by H. Gaden, 1912, and the "Dyide de Djenné" in Contes du Sénégal et du Niger, by Zeltner.

what it really is becomes clear: the figurative expression of a native mentality about which the European is usually very ill-informed and which deserves to be noted here briefly.

●778 [23] Anything that departs from the average, the ordinary, or the normal -- power, wealth, success, ... illness, poverty, misfortune -- to any extraordinary degree or in a suspicious way, is, for the Bambara in particular and for the Black in general, the manifestation of an occult force acting either spontaneously or after provocation.

643 That is why, in the eyes of a native, a chief (a paramount 778 chief, of course) is out of the common run, not so much because of the position he occupies as because of the magic powers attributed to him (1). Power is merely the reflection of his

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1. Compare, on p. 31 and p. 49, the conduct of Dina Wara and of Biton.

efficacies in magic and he himself is convinced that this is true. Everything he does is accepted without protest because his acts have a supernatural character. The only ones who can resist him are those who, like him, have special powers (2). Therefore he

[173]

2. Legendary traditions abound in magic combats; see especially the tradition concerning Dinga, the ancestor of the Wagadou people, and that concerning Samba Guéladio Diégui, the hero of Fouta.

makes a point of seeking the company and advice of initiates in matters that are hidden from the common herd. These are the sorcerers, magicians and marabouts, all of whom believe that they possess -- or appear to possess -- a share in the knowledge that allows its practitioners to influence the unseen. Sometimes he is one of them or becomes one, and in any event he is always, willingly or not, dependent upon them.

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778 This is an age-old state of mind, which Islam has merely strengthened, for the Black man, whether Moslem or not, always regards the marabout as a diviner, a performer of miracles, a maker of philters, talismans and amulets, and a caster of spells. Many facts attest the truth of this observation, and the tales which follow will afford examples.

*173 It is understandable that with such beliefs[1] the Black man could hardly be expected to admit that the life of an important person, a powerful chief or a founder of an empire, could possibly be or have been banal, ordinary or simple. That is why supernatural, fictitious deeds make up such a large part of the native historical traditions that one may look in vain for any trace of the actions we see performed around us day after day. One must be very thoroughly accustomed to this delusion in order not to give way to discouragement at being unable to grasp

[1] [i.e., in magical and occult power with influence over the supernatural. -Analyst]

*173 On the following Monday all meant to arrive promptly at the meeting; however, out of habit, instead of coming to Ségou-Sikoro [69] they went to Ségou-koro (1). Ngolo went there too,

[778]

1. Which was, for all practical purposes, their holy place.

bringing with him the four principal idols: ba Koungo-ba, Nyé-dingué-dou, na Ngolo-ko and Kolokoloni. Addressing the throng, he cried: "Someone must be chosen to look after these idols, for they are languishing in neglect. As for me, I shall keep the sacrificial knife."

"If the idols are languishing," interrupted Ngolo Ké-ba, "it's your fault, because our master has entrusted them to you. That's your duty, quite as much as guarding our master's houses at Ségou-Sikoro. For our part, all we want are guns and gunpowder."

"I can't give you guns and powder," answered Ngolo Dyara, "but I will give you all of Ton-massa's wives as well as the wives of Kanou-ba-nyouma and Kafa-dyougou. I can't marry them myself because I've married Mamari's daughter. The powder and the guns remain my share."

"That's nothing but trickery," replied Ngolo Ké-ba. "Why should we need these women when we all have our own!"

[587] "I'm not playing any trick," said Ngolo Dyara, "I'm offering you these women because it is customary among us for brothers to marry the wives of their deceased brothers and, if I were to keep them for myself, you would certainly cry scandal and injustice."

"No, we shan't say anything, for we're at your mercy and very uneasy. We're caught like a rat in the claws of a cat."

"Well, I'll do you no harm, provided that you swear to leave me as the guardian of everything up to the time when we once more have a master."

He dismissed them and called a meeting of the chiefs for the following Saturday at Ba-dyi-soumalén-ba, on the left bank of the Niger. Each chief was expressly ordered to bring with him only his kasa-bearer (2).

2. The kasa is a kind of woolen coverlet

771 In any case, these are questions which he does not ask or which, at least, he has not considered in any way that would cause him to make logical, even if fragmentary, syntheses. His words and his acts are indications and sometimes even guide-posts for us, but how uncertain and misleading they can be! And, in the observation of current facts, how many at least seeming contradictions there are! However, in the main, the analysis given in the paragraphs above represents the basis of Bambara dogma, since everything happens in reality as if the Bambara were living in accordance with these principles.

761 That being the case, life results from the union of the two parts of the body, while death is a result of their separation.
772 Whence come these two elements and who it is that decides upon their union? No answer is possible. The Bambara say, merely, that certain persons are reincarnations. Precautions
[844] taken during pregnancy and delivery show that childbirth is one of those mysteries against which taboos must be observed as a protection. The frequent and readily believed stories about
[845] women giving birth to monsters -- usually animals -- bear witness to the affinities which, in the minds of the Bambara, exist between all creatures. But nothing specific is said about what precedes and determines the birth of a child.

562 This is a secret to which the Bambara are, of course, not indifferent. It is evidenced in the fact that women, through
● 778 whom man comes into the world, are held to be doubtful creatures, at the very least, partly because of menstruation, which makes a woman impure, and partly because of the mysterious travail she endures during the delivery of a child (1).

[774] 1. Women are also susceptible of being possessed continuously by a spirit (see the story of the Déni-bo Ba, p. 123). That is why, when a woman is several times widowed, she is suspected of being possessed by a jealous spirit who kills off her husbands. She is often even thought to be herself a sorceress.

562 This suspicion readily degenerates into disrespect, scorn and
778 hatred when a woman [123] is weak -- this being the usual
state of affairs. On the contrary, the feeling changes to superstitious fear if she resorts to occult practices and shows herself
[754] an adept at sorcery. Many old women are held to be very expert at such practices.

In the same connection, it should be noted that a new-
851 born child is also subject to scrutiny. For seven days after birth it is not officially taken into the family, because it is thought that during this period the infant may undergo metamorphosis unless closely watched over by its mother.

We shall see, through a study of their institutions, how the Bambara conceive of life and organize it.

Funeral practices will show us how the Bambara regard the idea of death.

And after death?

775 The Romans distinguished among spirits: the manes or
769 good gods (dii[1] manes) and the lemurs or evil spirits, both of whom take an interest in the family.

The Bambara have analogous concepts.

Once it has left the body, the soul of a patriarch goes to join the souls of his ancestors, where it finds a spiritual family which protects the earthly family.

The manes (fa su-u) always like to frequent the places where their bodies lived, and that is why one keeps the things that belong to the deceased, why he is buried near his house or sometimes even under the floor, and why some families piously keep the skull of the departed to do it honor.

The entrance-hut (blon') is usually the site of the altar of
[778] the ancestors and of the family gods. The ancestral altar may be a small board with a human mask, called kara, or a mound of earth shaped vaguely like a human being. The manes are thought to enter into these objects to receive the offerings and sacrifices made to them.

It is sometimes thought that the world of the manes may be without light and heat but that otherwise they each continue the existence it had in life with the same passions, the same

1 [dei ? --Analyst]

776 precision of which the native substratum seems unaware. In any event, there is no Bambara word for "God" except the one [177] brought by the Moslems -- "Allah," pronounced as Ngala. This lack of a Bambara word may be explained by their custom of avoiding pronouncing the name of powerful people for fear of incurring their wrath.

[177] There is no superior spirit of evil: Seïtane [Satan] is likewise a Moslem introduction. The Bambara does not visualize a hierarchy of spirits.

776 Finally, it must be concluded, from the existence of many magic practices, that there is a belief in a kind of uni-
● 778 versal energy, which is diffuse by nature and which, by appropriate
789 means, one can capture and use as one likes. Certain genii or gods are merely emanations of this invisible, imponderable and active force, which no obstacle can stop and which can instantly overcome space and strike at a distance. This is the basis of all native magic.

[129] 2. Morality and Customs

776 When, as among Catholics and Moslems, the after-life is believed to be influenced by one's conduct in this life, there
577 is a rule which determines what is and what is not proper if one wishes to earn the greatest possible rewards in the life to come. The saints and pious men have shown the way to this end.

For the Bambara, however, the next life is merely a continuation of this one and he does not think that he can, by conduct, improve his chances in the next life since it offers no rewards or punishments for his day-by-day actions. Neither his manes nor his genii give him an example of conduct to guide him. Therefore, without thought of the future, he goes along solely concerned with the present; he seeks what will give him pleasure, tries to avoid what seems harmful, and all this in a groping way, as one walks in the dark.

577 Sometimes, it is true, he is led to behave with a degree
626 of decency and to avoid certain too shocking lapses, which would expose him to reproach, alienate his friends and create for him

789 In connection with the brotherhoods, we shall see how magic has been organized [141] in the very heart of native society and we shall observe the stability and the repercussions of its work.

Magic

778 789 774 Universal energy. There exist individuals who are subject to certain phenomena, as yet imperfectly known or explained, in which the human being is divided into two so that on occasion his immaterial self lives a life independent of his body in a sphere inaccessible to corporeal sense. Such a man then enters a milieu from which he brings back visions and sensations that he can only describe vaguely and frighteningly in his habitual language after he has returned to a normal waking state.

Among the Bambara, occurrences of this kind have been observed and good use has been made of them, especially in the brotherhoods. They constitute a confirmation of belief in the invisible world, as do dreams. And the Bambara sees many other indications -- which escape us -- of the existence of this extra-natural world which envelops everything and which he conceives as a force sometimes active and sometimes inert, diffused or personified. It is this energy which is, as it were, set in motion by a curse, by the extreme expression of envy called "evil eye," by luck or by misfortune. A chief's authority derives the essence of its strength from this activity. And it is the reason for honoring the dead.

This invisible force, instantly transmissible to the greatest distances, is present in all things; it exists everywhere, in everything and in everyone. It possesses or acquires a greater or lesser power in certain objects and in certain people for a stated period of time or for a temporary period. It can be beneficent or maleficent, or both in turn. The ordinary man who touches such objects or such persons will usually be struck dead or, at the least, gravely affected, as he would be if he touched a high-voltage electric current. For the initiate who knows the secret of this force and who knows how to use it, this

778 is a virtue which exalts his own faculties to such an extent that
789 it gives him a supernatural power that is terrifying to the uninitiated.

This property of transmission by contact accounts for the veneration which surrounds the possessions of eminent persons and those among the dead who [142] exercised power during their lifetime. Objects especially venerated are those that were in almost constant personal use: clothing, weapons, toilet articles.

The same property of transmission no doubt also accounts for the nature attributed to matter, which has been called continuity. Everything emanating from an object retains the occult energy within it, and, further, anything that "the man who knows" (don-na-ba) does to these detached parts affects the whole from which they came (1). That is why an undigested portion of

[787] 1. Divination by means of the kolon' kala, previously described, is allied to this belief. The bits and pieces of the deceased act as the dead man himself would do in guiding the bearers of the kolon' kala.

food, if suitably treated by the magician, can spoil the digested portion of the same food. The chronicle tells of how this theory of the continuity of matter was used against Bani. By means of hair and a sandal, stolen from him, the magician paralyzed Bani's clairvoyance and put him at Da's mercy.

791 Magicians. It is the learning of the magician which, so to speak, brings order out of the chaos of the world. In the broadest sense of the word, his art, magic, is a kind of utilization of the occult. It is true that there is no Bambara, from a chief down to the least of the slaves, who does not act as his own magician, but there are specialists and some of them very famous. Besides, not everyone can be a real magician. Natural talents give some individuals the power to penetrate the invisible world and to feel at home there. Some are initiated by genii who have taken a fancy to them, as shown in the chronicle of Biton; others learn the craft from a relative or a well-known magician, either at no cost or at great expense.

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609
821 "Can one imagine being given such orders? All that was left for them to do was to ask for the moon and the stars."

791
326 Niany is typical of many Sudanese blacksmiths, at least of those who actually practice their trade, and it is no wonder that the natives keep people of that caste at a safe distance and show them consideration, fear and a degree of scorn. For the Blacks, people as well as things connected with magic are inclined to take many forms.

791
224 Hunters also are magicians. One need only see a hunter start off to recognize that this is true. His person and his equipment are covered with amulets that constitute a covering as well as an arsenal of magic weapons.

825
778 The Blacks have a different idea of animals from ours; they too are powers with which one has to reckon. In proof of this, there is no animal, however tiny, which cannot be, at some time or other, very dangerous and therefore worthy of respect. So animals are addressed as "master" or "lord." The animals always to be feared are never called anything else:
[552] wara-ba means lion; sa-ma, elephant; ma-li, hippopotamus; bam-ma, [148] crocodile. Etymologically, all these names indicate "master" or "lord."

These terms are not meaningless; they attest a belief that supernatural power is incorporated in animal species. The attentions paid to animals have no other purpose than that of
825 conciliating the good-will of this power or, at least, of avoiding
789 its wrath. The common practice of using animal debris (skin,
[237] horns, tail, hair, offal, etc.) to make magic charms is an application of the principle of continuity of matter, of the individual and of the virtues peculiar to them. A rabbit's foot is tied to a
[843] pregnant woman's side in order to hasten the child's arrival; a small bag of lion skin will make the child brave and strong.

231
552 It seems likely that the domestication of animals is a happy result of magic practices. These tamed creatures are held to be "weak ones" and are treated as such. However, some of
825 their names show a trace of the esteem in which they were once held and which is still shown on occasion: fa-li meaning "donkey" derives from fa meaning "powerful," just as nya-ri meaning "cat" derives from nya and has the same meaning, along with ba meaning "goat."

231 825 meaning "goat." In the case of the goat, there remain some customs that are very suggestive. Its milk is the basis of the most solemn of all oaths, that of fraternization; milk is also used to put out fires started by lightning and the hide is used to make sandals worn by widows during the period of mourning. The chronicle tells us that a certain dish made of a goat's head gives rise to the chief's power and sustains it (1). In spite of all

1. See p. 31, in connection with Dina Wara.

this, the goat shares with the donkey a general scorn and they are considered to be the born companions of slaves. This is perhaps why some people refuse to allow either animal to come into the house. Indeed, it is believed that a rich and powerful man can be ruined if either of these animals enters his house or, even worse, if he touches them.

718 791 754 Magician's work. So it is that man is immersed in a strange fluid. In the final analysis, everything, man included, [149] is merely a manifestation of this fluid. Currents and eddies have all forms of life at their mercy, and only the strongest are able to resist, control and even acquire in the struggle greater power than they would otherwise display. "The one who knows" can avoid or follow this chaotic movement; he can control himself and others. He is the real "master" (soma) and he alone can utilize this ever present and ever powerful invisible world.

754 What makes a magician can be described by a single term: the magic weapon, to be used for defense as well as for attack, and indeed for anything else, by one who knows how to use it. Let us consider some of the examples in the Bambara arsenal.

For anyone who wants to destroy an enemy, the so ma sama (lit., "bundle of the person of the house") is a valuable weapon. It is a mysterious powder, kept in the horn of a hind, in which is placed a small stick. It is used in the following manner: let us suppose that a Bambara wishes to harm a person who is passing through the village. The Bambara secretly takes

788 as it returned to its point of departure. This was presumably because the operator had not done what was necessary to assure the reintegration of the supernatural power.

[778] There are thus rites that set in motion this universal energy, whether diffuse or personified -- rites that channel, direct and orientate this energy so that not only it will reach the goal sought, but also it will be kept from straying from the desired route, thus harming the very person it is supposed to aid. Similar means are used to forestall the misdeeds which may be committed by an agent mistakenly invoked. When Ngolo had aroused his son Ntyi's ambition, he thought he could conjure away its effects by sacrificing his two grandsons, Ntyi's own children.

Those actions that call upon, guide and reintegrate this universal energy, whether diffuse or personified, are what we call rites.

788 754 During the oath using kola, the operator has in his hand a sharp object (pin, thorn, etc.) with which he pricks or stabs through the nut, saying, for instance: "Take my heart and my liver and kill me, if...." (i ka ne son' ni m bien' ta, ni ...). These pricks indicate to the "power" with which the operator is concerned that, if necessary, it should take vengeance by piercing the guilty person, just as the kola is pierced by the pin (1).

1. The shirt sent by Ma-n-son to Forokoro was first pricked with a needle (p. 120).

In curses, all the imprecations used are so many indications, indeed sometimes instructions (2), as to how the [153] spirit invoked is requested to act.

[575] 2. At the time of admission to the brotherhoods, the most frightful threats are made against the traitor or perjuror in the form of curses indicating to the avenging spirit how he should punish: "may it enter through your anus and come out through your mouth, etc."

invoked is requested or required to act.

There are times when on the contrary, the native is inclined to hold the energy in check, in order to avoid the harm that would result from this sort of action. For this purpose he abstains from doing certain things; this is the origin of many taboos (tne).

The acquisition of magic power in order to gain strength or to be able to act so as to avoid being affected by magic or, finally, to be able to get rid of magic power when one is permeated by it to a dangerous point -- all these involve appropriate actions or rites whose forms and conditions only magicians or others gifted with intuition can determine.

The chronicle shows that chiefs make use of magic to try to strengthen the supernatural power which is the basis of their position. Dina Wara secretly ate a special dish made of a goat's head; Biton took special baths, whose virtues Ngolo appropriated by trickery just as Biton had done with respect to Dina Wara, his brother-in-law. All sorts of comparable practices accounted for the increase of Ngolo's "luck," that modal quality of supernatural power which confers a degree of magic potency on the possessor. This so-called "luck" has, as it were, a kind of radiation, which confers special good fortune on whatever it touches. That is why the marabouts advised Biton to live in close proximity to Ngolo so as to take advantage of the favorable atmosphere.

This energy is attached to everything and, especially, to objects that come into direct contact with anything impregnated with it. What one wears on oneself thus becomes a sort of accumulator, and that is why the objects left upon a powerful person's death are so carefully preserved and constitute the most valuable part of his legacy. The chronicle tells us with what veneration the cap and weapons belonging to Biton were regarded.

Magic force is therefore acquired by means of appropriate practices indicated by magicians; one shares its benefits by living near those entrusted with it by applying to oneself what comes from such privileged persons. Here again is a result of the continuity of matter. Whatever the case, anything

778 789 emanating from the person or object impregnated with magic force acts as if it were a part of that person or object. Often [788] the magician or [154] ritual officiant spits on the person or object involved in the rites. This is a means of transferring one person's fluid to another.

Conversely, it is vital to know how to avoid contact 751 with, or even emanations from, a maleficent magic force. 781 That is the reason for the great number of mysterious magic 754 practices and the secret of the innumerable amulets that form so many shields, to be placed presumably where they will best protect against any blow. Therefore it is the magician's prerogative to make amulets and to prescribe the conduct necessary to preserve their efficacy.

It should be noted that protection set up against a given person is good only for him and is useless against a successor, for instance. The chronicle tells us that Bani, chief of Samba-Nyana, was successful in using certain artifices to prevent Ma-n-son from conquering him. But, kept in ignorance of Ma-n-son's death and having taken no precautions against Da, Ma-n-son's son and successor, Bani was conquered by Da, against whom his artifices availed nothing.

If one is caught in spite of precautions, what is to be done? Everyone is afflicted in one way or another in any event. A Bambara is always inclined to believe in some sort of supernatural intervention. He has on hand some sort of remedy, but more often he resorts to a "seer" for guidance or, if the case requires, to a magician's skill.

Native medicine is a mass of magic formulas and of remedies strikingly reminiscent of the pharmacopeia of the Middle Ages (see, in the foregoing, father Niany's operations).

[571] The individual does not live as an isolated unit but 789 rather as an integral part of a community. In the society in 783 which he lives, however restricted it may be, he progressively occupies various situations. On both physical and moral levels, he undergoes changes and, depending on circumstances, whether fortunate or unfortunate happenings, changes take place within him. In short, his magic potential varies. These variations are always believed to concern the entire milieu, upon which they may (in the case of illness or death) have disastrous effects.

592 comparable to what our law defines as a family. In fact, the
601 four terms just discussed, ton', ba-denya, gwa, and so, are
596 all used for the purpose. It is what is intended by their use that gives them their meaning, and depending on the region, each term has a meaning made precise by usage.

592 The dwelling of the Bambara family usually includes
342 a fairly large number of huts of various kinds. Some are cylindrical and built of native masonry with a conical straw roof and, for a door, a slit or opening which does not extend all the way to the ground. Others are parallelepiped, made of native masonry, and ordinarily also provided with no opening except the door.

Shelters (gwa), consisting of flat straw roofs supported on forked sticks, are usually placed haphazardly or wherever the master of the house wants them and are certainly not governed by any traditional rules or fixed orientation. All these dwellings or out-buildings are enclosed by either a clay wall
[343] or an unbroken hedge whose two ends are supported by the walls of the hut called blon' which serves as a vestibule for the establishment.

[178] The altar of the ancestors and of the household gods is found in the blon'.

The houses of notables are somewhat more elaborately arranged: instead of a single inner court, there are two, three, or even more, sometimes graduated in extent. The master arranges his people in such a way as to divide into sections the heterogeneous elements gathered together under his protection.
592 The domestic servants and the young [161] men, the women, girls, and small children, and finally the eventual successor are, as it were, fenced apart in their own blocks of dwellings, while the fa himself is to be found in impressive isolation, which lends weight to his authority.

592 Among great personages, especially among heads of
712 clans, this arrangement is the rule, and their isolation deep in the interior is virtually a security measure. In the old days a kind of fortress or redoubt, the tata, was built in the center of the royal residence. Gunpowder, weapons, and all the means of defense were kept there, and it was no easy matter to capture

764 close the opening of the niche and carefully fill any cracks with earth moistened and kneaded on the spot.

During all this the women sing in a low voice and clap their hands, accompanied by muffled drums.

When all is done, the sons of the deceased come out of the excavation, and the principal gravedigger comes forward with his spade upside down on his shoulder and holding a gourd full of water in his hand. Silence falls, and the women and drummers are still. He pours some water at the head of the grave, saying: "See this water. Do not be angry, pardon [169] us, give us rain in the winter and an abundant harvest. May the wind blow from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south, as is best for us. Give us long life, many descendants, wives, and wealth." And the throng replies: "So be it (o de ka ke)."

With the back side of their spades the gravediggers then fill in the excavation. The women resume their singing in rhythm with the clapping of hands, and accompanied by subdued drums, they say: "Our fa is dead, but he will return! Young men, fill in the grave well so that no sorcerer (suba), no hyena, no wild beast can carry away the corpse."

764 When the grave is filled in, the person holding the strip of material still attached to the shroud pulls it so that it breaks. 778 This bit of cloth is a precious relic for use in various magical 789 performances. The magical bands called tafo are made from it and are tied around the waist to protect one from back ailments and spectral apparitions (1).

1. These are a few of the innumerable examples of magic practices which in the most diverse forms accompany all important activities.

The coarse mat which had served as a bed for the deceased is put upon the grave, along with a pair of his old sandals and his water jug. The finer mat is usually given to a friend or to a family, and it is then burned outside the village (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

596 614 honored by the new fa, and there is nothing to prevent him from adding to the treasure.

769 The basic cult of the family is the cult of the ancestors. Although the dead are frequently buried outside the family residence, their souls are thought to live in the blon' of the dwelling. The blon' is a hut with two openings on opposite sides, one [343 592] to the street and the other to the interior, usually the courtyard. It is impossible to enter or leave a house without going through the blon', where there is always a guard, at least in important houses. The ancestors are usually represented in the 778 blon' by a group of crude, conical clay figures of a man and 769 woman, the latter identifiable by the exaggerated breasts. Sometimes the symbol of the dead is a small board about a meter long, twenty centimeters wide, and a little more than a centimeter thick; at one of its extremities a slight protuberance vaguely suggests a head, a kind of ellipsoidal cylinder with eyes, nose, mouth, and chin faintly carved on one side. On the side with the face, the board has a checkerboard pattern, often of alternating black and red squares, probably to indicate the material of a loincloth. The lower extremity of the figure has a semicircular portion cut away to give the effect of legs spread apart when the effigy is set up.

769 782 778 Whatever form it may have, the representation of the dead is called kara (1) and serves in some manner as an altar

1. In Soninké, kara means "to die" and "death."

on which libations are poured and to which are attached the remains of the sacrifices made to the dead (su-u). Nevertheless, it is also a very widespread practice to make libations and sacrifices before the door of the blon' and, more rarely, before the door of an inner hut. In this case the liquid is poured and [775] the remains smeared on the vertical edge of the opening. This practice is based on the belief that the souls of the dead ancestors like to return to the place where the fa liked to sit during his lifetime. Undoubtedly, the ancestors are regarded as guardians of the threshold; they are [181] honored as such because it is believed that they prefer to be honored in this way.

769 This is the place where on important occasions the fa
778 receives congratulations or condolences, which are addressed
782 not only to him but also to the ancestors who, though invisible, are nevertheless present.

When the fa wishes to make an offering to the ances-
769 tors (fa su son'), he squats before the door of the blon' with his
782 head bare and a chicken in his hand. He addresses the most recently deceased (1), saying: "I offer this chicken in my own

1. It seems that the ancestors form a kind of chain in which the first invisible link is the ancestor most recently deceased and the first visible link is the current fa.

name and in that of my children. Jointly with our dead fathers and mothers, preserve us from sorcerers who eat souls (suba) and from the evil of the wicked; protect us from sickness and disaster; guard our health; give us good wives and healthy children; bring success to our work in the fields, and give us rain."

If the offering is being made for a particular purpose, the fa is explicit about it and speaks just as he would to a living person. He concludes by asking that the victim reveal the response by the way it falls as it dies. Then he cuts the chicken's throat and dribbles the blood on the wall at either side of the door of the blon'. He than resumes his crouched position, and after throwing the fowl a short distance, he watches its convul-
787 sions and waits for it to fall motionless. Usually the position is regarded as favorable if the animal dies with its legs in the air and its feet turned toward the officiator; if the feet are turned away, the response is unfavorable. Often, just as he completes the offering, the fa announces what position he considers favorable or unfavorable.

The fa gives the sacrificed chicken to his wife to be cooked, and then he divides it among the members of the family; this is truly a communion.

769 As a substitute for the chicken, it is very common to
782 offer some dege, a bit of millet coarsely ground and thrown in a little water. The fa keeps this liquid in a small gourd. It is perhaps [182] reasonable to think that this is the most ancient manner of honoring the dead and, in particular, calling for their protection in obtaining the two essentials of life: grain and water.

[273] An equally common libation is made with dlo, a kind of millet beer which every Bambara enjoys drinking to the point of intoxication. The dead could hardly fail to be pleased with an offering of what they had enjoyed so much on earth!

[276] One must conclude, too, that offerings of kola nuts please the dead because it gives them a chance to enjoy a favorite treat. The officiator chews the kola nut and then spits out his saliva mixed with the juice and remains along the walls of the blon'.

Such are the ordinary offerings, but on special occasions the quantity and importance of the gifts are increased according to the desired results. When many people are present and the [781] house is prosperous, the victims are oxen and sheep. It should not be forgotten that the flesh of these consecrated victims, eaten in common, makes a very strong mystical bond between the participants; it is a true communion. It is generally conceded that the bond created by drinking consecrated liquids together is much less strong.

776 In addition to his ancestors, every Bambara has as his
●778 special protector, one of those gods (nyana) which are created wholly by the work of the magician. Every family has one or more nyana, whose priest is the fa. The boli, the symbol and altar of this type of divinity, is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put into a leather or canvas sack, a gourd, or a pot. The nyana of Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, was a n-ko whose boli was kept in a monkey skin. The boli is taken out of its cover so that libations can be poured over it and animal remains smeared on it. If there is some objection to exposing it, the offering is put on the cover.

769 Everything that takes place relative to the cult of the
794 nyana is analogous to that described for the cult of the ancestors.

769 It has the same base: request, offering, communion. In addition, there is a liturgy appropriate to each nyana, in particular, the mysterious sayings that attract the god and make him [183] the actual servitor of the person uttering these sayings, rather than a benevolent protector. This shows the antithesis as to final ends between religion and magic, as was set forth in Chapter 2 of the present work.

596 614 778 The fa also has the responsibility of maintaining the efficacy of magic weapons; he must fulfill all the obligations required by each of them. Among them there are true nyana, sometimes independent, sometimes a part of the great nyana. Mostly they are amulets or talismans whose virtue depends on certain rites or simply on the observance of certain interdicts.

596 614 778 Finally, the fa is the guardian of custom and family relics, which likewise have a religious basis since custom, after all, is the continuing will of the generations, the imperious mandate of the ancestors, the table of law of the manes. Any transgression of custom is certain to bring the worst disasters. The relics are ordinary or ceremonial objects left by the successive fa. Some of them are so strongly associated with the patriarchal office that on special occasions or in certain circumstances the fa is forced by custom to wear these objects impregnated with the virtue of the ancestors. The cap and weapons of Biton at Ségou were of this nature, and such is the case among the Massa-si.

596 614 Relations between members of the community. Theoretically, the powers of the fa over the members of the community are absolute. He can hire them out, offer them as security, sell them, and even put them to death (1). He also

1. Note how Ma-n-son got rid of some of his brothers.

has the right to use whatever belongs to them,(2) both persons

2. Ngolo sacrificed his son's son.

311 Bambara seeks the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-
621 siri) or, more exactly, determines where this genie dwells. It
776 may be a spring, a hill, or a rock; often it is a fine tree, in-
794 variably surrounded by a grove or at least with a grove nearby. Then, always following the same procedure, he finds out the conditions under which the genie will allow someone to settle in his domain in order to live there and cultivate the lands. Thus, a contract is worked out which governs the man's exploitation of the genie's territorial domain. As a result, provided he worships the genie in the manner required, the man [228] will be able to work under the protection of the god. Anyone who has had a share in the contract, even if only through representatives, will likewise profit if he scrupulously observes the conditions.

621 The establishment of a village requires the cooperation of
622 several communities, each represented by its fa. One of these fa
793 will either appropriate the leadership or be chosen as the rep-
794 resentative or chief of the others. Sometimes he may be merely primus inter pares; otherwise he may have managed to have his primacy conceded by the rest. It is this chief who treats with the genie in the name of the whole village; thus, he becomes the "high priest of the genie" (nyana-n-son-na-ba) with the essential function of "making the offerings" (son') required by the cult. Furthermore, he administers the earthly domain of the genie and is therefore called dugu-tigi (master of the earth).

To the nyana dugu-da-siri is usually attributed the same dyamu as that of its high priest, just as though the genie belonged to the spiritual family of the priest. This is a result consistent with the mentality of the Bambara.

621 The same mental state accounts for the custom in certain
776 villages of dedicating a living animal, often a ram, to the
778 nyana dugu-da-siri and believing it to be the god's mount. The
[825] animal is allowed to wander freely about the village, and its mischief is never punished; indeed, the people enjoy caressing and indulging it. The animal takes on some of the attributes of the genie and is, as it were, endowed with certain supernatural virtues, so only good can come from contact with it.

621 Theoretically, each settlement has only one genie, but
776 actually it may have several, especially if it has been settled by

621 successive groups, each recognizing a genie-protector. In that
776 case, the genie first recognized and worshiped takes precedence over the others. In any case, social life requires each segment to respect the gods of its neighbors, and this respect carries with it a certain amount of superstitious fear.

311 It is evident from the foregoing that occupying and
621 cultivating land poses certain problems for the settlement bene-
794 fited, and these may be grouped under three heads: the cult of the genie-protector; the exploitation of the land; and the organization of the territorial community.

793 The cult. This is mainly supported by the high priest,
794 whose principal duty is to "make the offerings" (son') to the "genie" [229] (nyana), hence his title nyana-son-na-ba. He is assisted by the council of fa, one of whom, the syere (follower), may replace him in case of need. The office of high priest is for life and is inherited in the same way as his faya. This continuity shows that the genie is actually regarded as a kind of spiritual ancestor of the priest, as we have seen from the fact that it is given the same dyamu as its high priest.

794 The cult ceremonies are very simple. They consist of
796 offerings made by the high priest, who at the same time indicates to the genie the purpose for which they are being made. The most solemn ceremonies take place when millet is sown and harvested. For these occasions, every worshiper is expected to bring a contribution in proportion to his resources. The kind of gift is not specified; everyone brings whatever he can or whatever he wishes, usually animals (sheep, beef, fowl, etc.), grain, and especially millet beer (dlo).

782 During these general gatherings, from which no one is
796 excluded, only the high priest and the members of the council
● 778 enter the sacred grove or approach the genie's abode. There, the high priest makes known the purpose of the sacrifice: to thank the genie for his past favors; to offer him the gifts brought by everyone; and to ask him to continue to protect the community so that its prosperity may be assured. Then the victims are sacrificed, and their blood is sprinkled on the tree trunk or whatever object or place is reputed to be the home of the genie.

Nyana

794 776 Each brotherhood is founded on the cult of a spirit (nyana). What we call "spirit" to indicate its immateriality, the Bambara from another point of view calls "power," "master," "lord", etc., for such is the meaning of the words nya, nyana, nama, dyara, komo, faro, etc., by which he designates the innumerable "gods" of his pantheon, thus affirming his subjection to this invisible restraint upon him.

It is the magician who creates the nyana of the boli worshiped by the brotherhoods with which we are here concerned. His incantations call up a kind of echo from the invisible; his persistent and peremptory practices produce a sort of personification of his desire in the depths of the universal and diffuse energy, because he "names" the thing he wants. The nyana thus created, which he attracted by "naming" it, is retained by offerings and sacrifices, just as a person is seduced by presents. Finally, he forges a link with the nyana through communion. From that point on creature and creator are [253] so closely bound to each other that neither can refuse anything to the other; they form a single being whose visible aspect is completed by the invisible.

Judging from statements, concepts, and practices, this is the native belief as to the mysterious work of the magician. The latter creates as many nyana as he likes, and he draws at will on the invisible which he fashions and rules.

Boli

794 ●778 Mankind in general and the native in particular need to give material support to their speculations. The magician and the believer alike need to have at hand the nyana, this essence which is personified by being "named." Appropriate procedures make the nyana come to that altar which at the same time is its symbol and which the Bambara call boli (1).

1. Otherwise known as buri. It should be noted that in ordinary language the

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terms nyana and boli are used interchangeably. This is natural enough since the latter is merely the symbol of the former.

Each nyana has a boli which in form and substance is peculiar to it. Anything may be used to make boli: horn or hair of the hare, hind, or cattle; nails or claws; animal venom or excretions. It is not unusual to find parts of a human body put to use. As the chronicle tells, the war drums of the tondyon' were elevated to the rank of boli and were then adorned with the craniums and jaws of human beings sacrificed to them. Often the ball tied to the end of a piece of rope or leather and used to beat the tabala [Tr., big drum] is a human hand which has been severed and wrapped in a leather cover.

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Certain of the boli, particularly those of the Komo and the Kono, are said to be made of a child's torso; those of the Tyi-wara and Nama are made of wood, and those of the Duga of horn.

All sorts of shapes are employed: men, animals, doll-like figures, balls, small crowns, etc. The principal boli, called boli-de-n-fa, is accompanied by subsidiary ones called boli-de.

The boli is also given sex: one is male, another female; and it is said that there is a kind of mystical copulation [254] from which at the time of initiation are born the spiritual sons of the nyana.

Among boli should be noted those made of forked sticks, such as the n-Golo and the Tyi-wara, both patrons of brotherhoods of young men (1).

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1. If one makes certain comparisons, the forked stick seems to deserve special attention. Among the Khassonké, for instance, the soli-ma always build their seclusion hut (bire) with a forked post in the center. This post, called biri-makho (master of the hut), is a tree trunk chosen

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and cut by the gankurango (magician-protector of the soli-ma among the Khassonké) because it is so placed in the forest that the normal progress of the sun follows the axis formed by the two branches of the fork. There is thus some relation between the sun and the forked tree called biri-makho. Perhaps the same relationship accounts for the sleeping position of the boys in the bire: they always lie with their heads toward the center post and their bodies forming the spokes of a wheel around it. During the soli ceremonies the same Khassonké soli-ma use a short wand forked at one end.

The forked stick with mystical significance is also found among the Koniagui.

It is not possible, given the present state of our knowledge, to be specific about the origin or significance of this symbol. For the same reason, we cannot say whether it can be related to the lyre-shaped stones found in the mysterious collection of rocks discovered in Gambia, in which there is thought to be discernible a clearly defined cult of the sun (cf. Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F., 1920, No. 1).

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778 To the European these boli are thoroughly repulsive objects. Since magic utilizes everything (2), all kinds of things

2. And particularly things which are considered repulsive in ordinary life.

are used to make them, and during the sacrifices, blood, hair, feathers, viscera, etc., are usually placed on the boli. The result is usually a repugnant sight. The native, however, seems to pay no attention to this repulsive aspect which so horrifies

794 Europeans. The Black sees only the symbolic altar which he
778 venerates. Besides, in theory at least, the boli does not acquire its prestige in the eyes of the Black from its strange or bizarre nature; the fact that it is consecrated confers upon it its sacred character and its ritual use. That is why, in general (3), the

> 3. I say "in general" because there are exceptions. The skull of a chief named Sama, who ruled over a village called Gniningo in the Gangaran area, was the boli of a cult created by that chief. When the skull was destroyed, that put an end to the cult, since it was impossible to replace this unique object.

destruction of a boli no more means the destruction of [255] the corresponding cult than destroying a statue of Buddha would mean the annihilation of Buddhism.

The making and consecration of a boli are matters not easily accessible to the profane. Here is what Raffenel's informant, Bouo, told him about a boli belonging to the Massa-si: "The sorcerers first sought a very rare tree. They approached it in a procession, dug a hole at its foot, and after invocations in an unknown tongue gathered parts of its roots with bizarre ceremonies. Using the same invocations and ceremonies, they procured some hairs from the tail of a black horse. So that these ingredients should answer their purpose, they had one of their number take off his trousers and shirt and then pick up the objects (1). The bark and the horsehair were placed in an earthen

> 1. It is common for a sorcerer to remove all his clothing for the performance of his duties.

vessel and remained there for half a day over a hot fire. During this last day the proxy of the magicians prostrated himself, face to the ground, seven times seven times, while reciting prayers in a language which no one could understand.

794 778 "After the creation came the consecration. The Kouroubari and the leaders of the people witnessed it. A white ox, a red ox, and a red rooster were sacrificed for the occasion (2)."

2. Raffenel, Nouveau voyage au Pays des Nègres [New Journey to the Country of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 237.

The boli is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put in a sack or other receptacle, and except during ceremonies it [846] is stored with other cult objects in a kind of temple often resembling a miniature native hut and called nyana-bon', "hut of the nyana."

[776] Obviously there are differences between the various nyana, because peculiar practices call up unlike spirits. In any event, however, the captive spirit is, as it were, a slave of the magician, who treats it as such and even sells it, along with instructions for its use. There are magicians who go from place to place, making and selling nyana and other magic weapons, and [443] there are recognized markets where one can always [256] obtain the boli of the most popular nyana. The markets at Bélédougou, Bendougou, and Follona are especially well known.

Trade in Boli

794 778 438 The chronicle of Ségou tells that Biton, the founder of the empire, acquired his principal idols in the Bendougou region where the popular markets of Moribala, Kourbadougou, and Diali are located.

Itinerant merchants deal in all sorts of cult objects, and there are settled traders who are sometimes very well known, like a certain Minkoli who made boli and was so famous that his village is named after him: Minkoli ka dugu (village of Minkoli). I have never been able to find out, however, which village in the Bendougou area was the home of the famous Minkoli.

By such means the cult of a given nyana, once it has been created, spreads to some extent, depending on the degree

794 to which its creator chooses to reveal the ritual of initiation.
778 The head of a family, just like an isolated individual
438 or the head of a large community, will not fail to acquire, for a monetary consideration, exclusive possession of one of these powerful boli, which becomes his personal protector. Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, had with him the nyana n-Ka; Biton, the founder of the empire of Ségou, possessed several famous nyana: na n-Golo-ko (1), Nye-n-dinge du (2), and ba Kung-o-

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1. Literally, na-n-Goloko, "the mother concerned with birth" or, freely translated, "the goddess who presides at birth."

2. Nye dinge du, "the deep orbit of the eye."

ba (3). Generally speaking, these private cults cannot spread,

3. Ba-kung-o-ba, "mother of the great bush."

but when their possessor becomes a powerful chief, they migrate rapidly. This is what happened to Biton's cults; his followers took up the worship of his idols.

794 When an individual becomes the acknowledged possessor of a nyana the result is an alliance with this nyana, which in the native language is called furu, the same word as that used for the [833] conjugal union of a man and a woman. Indeed, the installation of a renowned nyana in its master's village gives rise to rejoicing [257] similar to that occasioned by a wedding; hence, the following expressions: a ye boli furu, "he is united with a boli"; a ye boh' furu gosi, "he has effected a union with a boli"; a-ta boli konyo kera, "he has celebrated the wedding of his boli." On the day of such festivals, the master of the nyana (nyana-tigi or boli-tigi, surrounded by his acolytes, offers dlo to his guests who have come to greet him and give him presents. At nightfall, when the uninitiated have withdrawn, the clergy and the adepts in a procession take the boli to the "sacred wood" where the first cult ceremony is held, characterized principally by dancing and singing.

778 435 The cash value of boli varies considerably. At the most it is between 30 and 40 francs, payable in kind or in cowries. The cost is increased, however, by gifts to the seller and his acolytes who come to instruct the new clergy in their functions. As a result, considering the various kinds of refreshments, dogs, goats, and chickens, as well as kola nuts and millet beer (dlo), the price may actually come to 100 francs.

778 794 Since the nyana-tigi (master of the nyana) has full control over his nyana, he may admit anyone he likes to the benefits of his cult. Well-known cults have been much sought after, and as they developed, they became complicated. As the importance of a cult increases, its ceremonies are amplified and augmented in proportion to the number of people taking part in them. Initiation requires a fee, and a clergy becomes necessary. This is the way that these cults, established through participation, have given rise to associations which the Europeans call "secret societies" but which might better be called "brotherhoods," because of the spiritual filiation uniting the affiliates.

Mysteries and Liturgical Equipment

Everything that concerns the brotherhood of the nyana is shrouded in mystery; for various reasons, everything is concealed (do, as the natives put it). It is, indeed, a principle of magic that power exists only insofar as its essence evades the investigation of its adversaries. The uninitiated therefore, must not know the basis of the supernatural power of the nyana, because, if they knew, they would be able to acquire the means of [258] destroying it, resisting it, or at the very least rendering it inefficacious. Anything related to the nyana is bound to it and is, so to speak, an integral part of the nyana by virtue of consecration: the clergy and the liturgical equipment. That is why both are do and why every effort is made to hide them, in their magical aspect, from curiosity of the profane. By extension, however, all members of a brotherhood of any nyana of the boli in Bambara country are identified as do-u, "the hidden people."

794 621 brotherhoods together, although the latter seem to dominate the former. These brotherhoods hem in the communities they dominate by abusively extending their jurisdiction far beyond its proper limits. Indeed, the faithful are not the only ones who are subject to the judgments handed down by the brotherhoods, whose clergy make decisions affecting not only members involved but often also third parties in the neighborhood or even people from neighboring or distant regions. The brotherhoods are tyrannical toward their own members and no less so to strangers, who often see no way of escaping persecution short of asking to be received into the ranks.

794 661 182 Thus, it is apparent how a brotherhood increases in size and in power as time passes. Each year it takes in the young people at the end of the soli, and as a result all the communities are at length absorbed by it live in it and for it (1). It

1. The following is a typical example.

[778] In the village of Marenna (Fouladougou Arbala), the natives belong to the cult of Ba-ku. This boli consists of a small sheaf of roots of the indigo tree. For every newborn child the nyana-tigi makes and consecrates a small Ba-ku, which he places in a gourd and puts in the temple of this nyana. At the time of the soli, the child becomes affiliated with the cult, takes the boli placed in the gourd for him at birth and henceforth wears it on his person. All the families in Marenna are thus closely involved in the cult of Ba-ku, being, as it were, engendered by this god to whom each person owes both physical and spiritual birth. Ba-ku comes from Sangaran, and his high priest is a Dyara; that is why he is invoked and called by the expression Ba-ku Dyara Sangaran-ka. The word ba-ku literally means "tail of a

794 country and that the Bambara Massa-si, who had fled to
173 Gadiaga, received it, in turn, from one Namori or Nyamori, a former slave who had been initiated into the mysteries of the Koré and who, for that reason, was named Kor-dyuga.

794 Over and above the general characteristics already noted,
778 the Komo has the following peculiarities.

It is said that to make it perfect the boli of the Komo requires the body of a degeni, that is, of a very young boy. Thus, the body of the Komo of Tiguini (20 to 40 kilometers from Ségou) is said to be none other than the body of the grandson [271] of its founder. The same thing is said of the boli of the Komo at Kégué in Bani territory.

This boli-den'-fa is equipped with three iron tubes, and the whole thing is called tama gengen-ba (1). There is a horn

1. The term Komo dyoloro, meaning "chain of the Komo," is used in front of the uninitiated. The wara-da, oracle of the Komo, is called dyoloro samana, "he who drags the chain" of the Komo. In the special language of the cult, "sacrificing to the Komo" is expressed by an bi nege son' (we pay homage to the iron).

at the end of one of these tubes, with an opening serving as a mouthpiece. The sound drawn from this trumpet of sorts by the wara-da announces a meeting of the Komo.

The usual accessories accompany the boli-den'-fa: korti, kana, and siri-kun', which we have already mentioned.

When not in use for ceremonies, all this equipment is
[281] put into baskets similar to those used to transport cotton. The tama-gengen-ba are wrapped in a tiger skin. A hut with a conical roof, similar to the native huts, serves as a temple and holds all the regalia. It is called the Komo-bon' (hut of the Komo).

When he is on duty, the wara-da, "oracle" of the Komo,
793 is dressed in a special costume consisting of a mask and a cloak.
794 The mask is surmounted by horns and does not cover the face, but
778 rather is affixed to a stick hidden in the folds of the cloak; it goes up and down at the pleasure of the wara-da, who is completely

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794 covered by the cloak made of feathers from guinea fowl and
778 chickens. Beneath this garb, the wara-da performs all sorts of acrobatics. Skillfully manipulating the mask and the cloak during ritual dances, he gives the illusion, in the light of the fires, of a fantastic creature whose cries, transmitted through the horn, terrify even the initiated.

793 In addition to the wara-da, the clergy includes: a
794 Komo-tigi, high priest; some muru-kala-tigi, sacrificers; a da-ro-tigi, porter, who announces and prepares for the meetings; and a Komo-dyeli, herald. There are also student wara-da, called soma-den' (literally, "elder sons" in the special language), who act as assistants, and finally, there are many other auxiliaries who form a cortege with the wara-da when he carries the boli in nocturnal processions. These people are grouped together under the term tie-den' or tigi-den' ("sons of the master" in the special language). Conspicuous among them are the ta-tugu who [272] carry the flaming torches which are so characteristic of the nocturnal processions.

When the wara-da makes known the revelations of the god, he speaks through the tube with the horn. Since he uses the special language and since the tube distorts the sounds, the Komo-tigi must interpret for him. It is the Komo-dyeli who shouts the revelation which echoes through the night.

794 At the time of the two great annual ceremonies, the
796 wara-da takes the boli and the other liturgical equipment to the sacred grove. The Komo-tigi directs the ceremonies. The sacrifices are entrusted to the muru-kala-tigi among whom are to be noted: the one who brings the victim and who, when the ceremony takes place in the temple, leads it across the threshold (1); and the one who removes the victim and carries its body

1. This door is then called nyena-ma don'-da, "entry of the living," in the special language, and the muru-kala-tigi who brings the victim in is called da-kuna-sigi or "master of the fatal (literally 'bitter') door."

794 For a certain length of time, the new members are kept
796 in seclusion while being instructed by initiates, especially the older ones, who see to it that they learn the songs and dances and become familiar with the special language. It is in the course of this instruction that they are given certain formulas to use for recognition among the komo-den' (sons of the Komo). The following are two examples and by no means the only ones; each Komo-ya has its own formulas, and in addition the adepts of the various Komo-ya are readily inclined to fraternize, especially when they are alone, far from their respective groups. In such cases, the identical principles of their cults bring them together, and they question each other at once:

[539] --E b' a la wa (Are you a member)?

--M ba' la (I am).

--N'i b'a la, tyoko dyira r na (If you are, show me the secret sign).

[201] This sign varies and is completely arbitrary. Sometimes it involves raising the hand with the fingers spread apart in a certain way; at other times, twigs are placed in a special pattern, and so on. [275]

The Nama

794 This cult arose at an unknown date at Missango (Bélédougou). The head of the Nama at Missango is addressed respectfully as Fura-tigi-ba, meaning literally, "grand master of the fura (fura specifically means "leaf" of a tree and, by extension, "remedy"). This is one of the expressions with double meanings which are so common in the brotherhoods: Fura-tigi-ba, the great physician, great savant, grand master.

The Nama is also called Nama-koro and Suya-koro, and a certain Nama is called Siriman 'fin'.

[778] Objects used in worship include: the Nama-kon-golo-u (craniums of the Nama), which are a kind of headdress, usually made of linge wood and shaped like fantastic birds; the wara-se (literally, "foot of the wara"), a small wooden board about a meter high with three horns affixed to it; and a similar board with two horns, called nye-bla.

794 There are, of course, the usual accessories: kana,
● [778] korti, siri-kun', pottery, bells, horns, and so forth.
Most of these objects are stored in a small hut called Nama-bon', similar to the native huts.

794 The ceremonies take place in a grove which is reserved
778 for the purpose. If there appears to be not enough privacy in spite of the dense foliage, or for some other reason, a palisade (dyase) or a few straw mats are put up to form an enclosure. In the special language of this brotherhood, the term for offering a sacrifice to the Nama is dyase son' (literally, "to honor the palisade").

794 The assemblage of the adepts of the same Nama constitute a Nama-ya, Nama brotherhood. Persons who wish to form a Nama-ya appeal to an existing Nama-ya to obtain the secrets or, more accurately, the rules governing the brotherhood: the mysterious words and acts by which the god (wara) is summoned and made amenable to his worshipers; cult objects; organization and role of the clergy and of the common worshipers; the liturgy, etc.

The fundamental ceremony by means of which the priest and his god are united is called furu, "union, marriage," in the special language of the brotherhoods. [276] Once a year, through the furu of the Nama, males and females, the Nama-de-u (spiritual sons of the Nama) are born. Behind this realism, required for the ordinary adept, is there not hidden a profound meaning for the initiate; is not close union with the diety a "spiritual marriage" in all the great religions? Possibly the special language is not intended merely to hide secrets from the prying curiosity of the profane, but is also intended to hide a profound meaning, today unknown to almost all the initiates, but felt and perhaps even known, at least vaguely, by some of them!

793 In every Nama-ya there are various functions and ranks,
794 corresponding to different grades of initiation. The grand master, Nama-tigi, is often the person who contributed the most for the expenses of founding the Nama-ya; he directs and watches over the cult and is therefore a feared and formidable personage.

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The Kore (1)

1. One also hears "Kote" and, in the Bani region, "Kwere." It should be noted that these three words, Kore, Kote, and Kwere, all have an ending which is frequently found in Soninké but not in Bambara.

[193]

The Kore is particularly popular in the Bani region, that is to say, the riverine area of this tributary of the Niger, in the part that is on a line with Ségou.

This brotherhood has the peculiarity of having a cult which honors the three divinities always worshiped by the Bambara: the manes, the god of the soil, and the nyana of the boli. Therefore the site of the brotherhood is the chosen site of the god of the soil, usually a tree within a grove (Kore-tu, "grove of the Kore") near the village. A kara, that is, the little board symbolic of the dead, and a surku-kongolo (skull of a hyena), the boli of the Kore and for that reason called the Kore-kongolo (skull of the Kore), are kept here.

[778]

The clergy and its assistants form a large body of personnel that includes all of the faithful. [281]

In addition to the high priest, Kore-tigi, there are the "people of the kara" (kara-ma-u) and the persons who wear masks, called wara-u (1) (wild beasts) or sogo-u (savage animals),

1. The terms wara or sogo are usually applied to all those who have some function, from the suruku to the ngoni-sama.

among whom are hyenas (suruku), lions (dyara), and monkeys (sûba). The persons in costume, called Kor'dyuga (2), are for the

2. The term seems to come from the Soninké language: Kore yugo or Kor'-dyuga, "man of the Kore." The expression Koré-duga-tigi is a corruption

794 process, let loose a rain of sparks which the Kore-duga zealously
796 put out with leafy branches. Then each dancer, carrying what
786 is left of his torch, kneels before the drums, making an obscene gesture which arouses the laughter of the onlookers and giving the cries, roars, or laugh of the "wild beasts." Elsewhere, the nyoni-sa-ma are roaming among the drinkers, tearing at themselves with thorns. Flagellants lash themselves with switches
[785] that leave cuts from which the blood flows. They stiffen themselves against the pain and keep up this cruel sport, which once again the Kore-duga mitigate by binding up the wounds.

There appears to be no doubt that during these orgies the most shameful excesses are committed without the slightest restraint.

The Nya

794 This brotherhood is highly esteemed in all the Bambara villages in the cantons of Say and Karadougou. It is less common in the canton of Séladougou; in the canton of Saro, five-sixths of the villages are loyal to it. It is rarely found in Nyansannari, and outside these areas in the circle of Djenné, there are only a few scattered Nya brotherhoods in the Bendougou and Ségou areas.

The cult arose in the Bendougou region. As has been
[443] noted above, the villages of Moribala, Kourbadougou, Diali, etc., are market villages where all the boli are found, together with directions for using them.

•778 The boli of the Nya consists of a piece of wood from 25
794 to 30 centimeters in length and from 10 to 15 centimeters in height and width. It is wrapped in an absorbent material, usually cotton. The blood of the victims and the liquid of the libations are poured on this boli, and then hairs or feathers and bits of entrails, eggs, and kola nuts are stuck to it, giving it a
[281] repulsive appearance. It is true that the boli is often concealed from inquisitive eyes by putting it in a container made of an old piece of the hide of a she-goat. However, since the container is given the same treatment as the boli it contains, it is just as disgusting.

794 This boli-den'-fa is provided with the usual boli-de:
778 kana, korti, siri-kun', etc. [284]
346 A hut with a conical roof serves as temple (Nya-bon').
534 An orchestra accompanies the ceremonies; it includes a kind of harp, made by the natives and peculiar to the Nya, plus large numbers of the usual drums, bells, and trumpets.

Since the Nya is acquired by purchase, the high priest (Nya-tigi) is theoretically the person who contributed most generously to this purchase. The office may also be attained by inheritance or by election. The truly religious role, however, is that of the wara-mina-den', the medium through which the god reveals his will or his desires and who is, therefore, the oracle (wara-da) of the Nya. A certain amount of training by appropriate methods is necessary to acquire the degree of extra-lucidity claimed by the wara-mina-den', and that is why they are recruited by co-optation.

794 Under the influence of the Nya, the wara-mina-den' falls
787 into a trance. His speech, hesitant and strange, is incomprehensible to the common people. The Nya-tigi then approaches to receive and to interpret the oracle. The inspiration of the wara-mina-den' may be spontaneous or it may be provoked and deliberately sought by him. For example, when a person dies, the wara-mina-den' questions the Nya, either at the request of the interested parties or of his own volition. For this purpose, he retires to the temple (Nya-bon'), concentrates on the point to be clarified, and after meditating, withdraws (1). He then sometimes

1. These details were given to me by a wara-mina-den' of Soun-Bambara.

falls asleep, and while he sleeps, the Nya reveals the truth to him in a dream. On other occasions the wara-mina-den' falls into a trance, and the spirit speaks through his mouth. One way or another, it is learned whether the death is to be attributed to the Nya and, if so, why. Or it is made plain that it is the work of the suba and under what form, human or otherwise, they are hiding. Or, finally, it is learned whether some other nyana struck down the deceased.

534 beating surface. The most highly regarded was the denu-ba;
614 made of a hollowed cylindrical trunk with fairly thick walls,
701 the denu-ba is sometimes more than a meter high, with its lower third often slightly tapered with an adze. The drumhead is made of strong hide, reinforced in the center by a patch of leather sewed to it and stretched on pegs driven into the sides of the drum a few centimeters below the upper edge. When it is to be played, the drum is inclined on a fork that supports it. The drummer uses a kind of wooden hook, cleverly curved for elasticity and provided at one end [315] with a rounded part, often formed by a swelling contrived for the purpose or at other times made of a leather ball. The drummer's free hand provides the syncopation.

In certain cases, two denu-ba are used together; the drummer strikes them in such a way as to obtain a variety of sounds to form the basis for conventional harmony. Thus, the soldiers not only were trained to obey appropriate flourishes, but also were kept in touch with distant battalions by means of the
[202] drums. When it was skillfully played, the denu-ba made it possible to transmit information for considerable distances, because other drummers would retransmit it in turn. That is why it has
[778] been said that the denu-ba can talk and no doubt why it was so highly regarded by the ton'-dyon' that they considered it an oracle and honored the god who spoke through the drum by making the denu-ba the boli of this god. Hence, human victims came to
[782] be sacrificed to the drums of the ton'-dyon', especially under Ngolo, according to the chronicle.

[237] Trumpets (buru) were formerly made of ivory. The Tedzkiret speaks of the ivory trumpets used by a certain Bambara named Maro, and Mage relates that Ahmadou, Sultan of Ségou, gave the Bambara their ivory trumpets on the occasion of the Moslem festival.

[237] These ivory trumpets, however, have disappeared, no doubt carried off by traders. Trumpets made of horn, which were used concurrently with the ivory instruments, have been substituted for them. The horns of the large antelope are much in demand for this purpose. An opening is made a few centimeters from the pointed end, and the trumpeter makes the sound through this opening. The only result is a loud but monotonous noise.

614 between Ségou-koro and Kirango was the area under what we
631 would call direct administration, because this zone was occupied substantially by the fama, his community, and his ton'-dyon'.

614 Ségou-koro, which had witnessed the birth and the de-
794 velopment of the clan, had remained Mamari's capital; he preferred to live there, and he had installed the protective idols of the clan there. Thus it was, so to speak, the seat of the brotherhood, whose four principal idols continued to be known under the
778 names of ba Kongo-ba, na n-Golo ko, Nye-dinge-dun', and
776 Kolo-koloni. [319]

The fama was the high priest, and the other officiants of the cult were chosen from among the ton'-dyon'; that is why Ngolo Dyara was dye-n-fa. Any follower of Mamari or his successors was affiliated with the cult of these idols. The adepts who lived far from Ségou-koro founded branches which in certain ways were so dependent on the capital that Ségou-koro was for a long time regarded as a holy city.

We have no detailed knowledge concerning the cult of these important idols; we only know that in general they did not differ greatly from what we have already said about the nyana of the boli. The annual festival was exceptionally solemn and brought the faithful from even quite distant regions. The fama, of course, presided over the ceremony which involved certain essential rites: a renewal of religious faith, the reception of new
614 members, and an oath of loyalty to the fama.
794 The four deities mentioned above were not the only ones
776 in the Bambara pantheon at Ségou (1); others were added, some

1. In Les Bambara [The Bambara], Father Henry mentions, in addition to ba Kongo-ba and na-n-Golo-ko, two other idols, Kuantara and Safolo.

bought and others invented out of the extravagant faith of the ton'-dyon'. Among the latter should no doubt be included the drums of the ton'-dyon', which are mentioned several times in the accounts and which are presented always in a very bloodthirsty light. Ngolo sacrificed his most hated enemies to the drum-idols,

2: Monteil--384 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Plate 4

Fig. 7. Penperenni, small dancers in costume.

•778
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Fig. 8. N'Tomo mask decorated with cowries.

[End Plate 4]

622 gives the orders concerning local celebrations and initiations.

In fact, the land originally belongs to spirits, and the chief 622 who succeeds the founder of the village is the only one who is able 776 to establish contact with the chief of the spirits and negotiate with him. He is the earthly administrator of the spirit; he assures his worship, the exploitation of the land, and the organization of the community territory.

621 The first chief of the land was the first occupant; the suc- 622 ceeding chiefs are his heirs, following the order of succession. To found a new village, a chief chooses a place in unoccupied territory, usually at a crossroads, near a water source, near a baobab, 718 a doubalé, or other sacred tree. He offers sacrifices to the spirits 824 and receives in exchange their authorization to settle. If his group prospers, and less fortunate families want to establish themselves in this well-favored location, they ask the chief for authorization. However, as Monteil (1) remarks: "... The fa of a familial com-

1. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta].

munity depends strictly on the patriarchy only if, attached to it by the male line, he holds some goods of the patriarchy or if he claims rights in this patriarchy. In the contrary case, the family fa conducts himself as a stranger in relation to the patriarchy, which can only treat him in like fashion ..." Every familial community becomes patriarchal at the death of the family head when he has no heirs (see the chapter on inheritance); the community then groups around itself familial communities which themselves include paternally related groups and maternally related groups. When the patriarchy is an old one, a considerable number of persons live under its aegis. All recognize dyamu and taboos (see below) in common.

621 When the settlement becomes too populous, a fa gathers a 631 group and founds another village. Afterwards, the people of neighboring districts may solicit the patronage of the first village, by participating in its djo (2) and by sacrificing to its guardian spirits.

2. See the chapter on religion.

773 abandoned Faro to follow him. Faro vanquished him and punished men by giving them the joints used in manual labor, which all were forced to do. Births became single, but, in compensation, each being had a double, dya, which lived in water.

After these successive disorders, each of which, however, was followed by the acquisition of new knowledge or of a new technique, Faro again undertook Creation and reorganized the universe by a voyage to the ends of the earth. He established the system of the rains, and he classified living beings according to series, each series having a head of the list. Men thus were named and classed by race and by caste, beginning with the slaves. He gave men the eight cereal seeds which remain the basis of their subsistence and which are forever in [826] their clavicles. Finally, he controls all existence and acts of beings placed under his domination.

The present order is only a phase in space and time. Twelve waters are still hidden; they must in the future, on the order of Faro, rise and spread in the world. They will make known the words of the future, and the world conceived by Yo will be realized.

776 All this mythology is presently represented by numerous objects 778 which serve as props for the different rituals regulating men's lives.

Pemba in represented in the houses of the religious chiefs and heads of families by a wooden block named Pembele, image of the first thick plank (1). In a [83] central hollow, symbolizing the tomb,

1. See S. de Ganay, "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara" [Aspects of Bambara Mythology and Symbolism]. [Ed., J. psych. norm. et path., Vol. 42 (1949), pp. 181-201.]

are engraved three times 22 marks representing Pemba the creator, the transmission of his Word, and his power to Faro, the token of his foreknowledge of all things, etc. Pembele is an altar guaranteeing the prosperity and life of the group.

776 If the balanza tree no longer is the object of a cult, the Bambara still regard it with a special attitude, which recalls its former role. Mousso Koroni is the impure and untilled land; the agricultural techniques she taught are a partial reparation for the disorders she created. This farm work wounds and purifies the land at the same

782 The blood sacrifice is the basic element of the rites. The
778 technique used for it has been described by M. Griaule (2). The

2. M. Griaule, "Remarques sur le mécanisme du sacrifice Dogon (Soudan français)" [Remarks on Sacrificial Techniques of the Dogon (French Sudan)], Extract from the Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. X, 1940.

Bambara have three types of altars: the wooden stumps called pembele, altars made of roughly hewn stone, which generally represent the ancestors; and the Nyama or boli, man-made objects representing the parts of the universe.

794 The cults can be individual and familial or general for the whole village, such as the dasiri and the dangu. They are organized by religious societies, dyo, whose object is to conserve the spiritual forces of their members. For the men, these societies are: the Komo (principally), the Kworé, the Nama, the Kono, the Nago, the Nya. The women are also grouped in dyo, as yet little known, while the uncircumcised are members of the N'Domo.

The Komo is a hierarchical society whose members have obligations and taboos, such as initiation for future dignitaries of the political and religious society, study of traditions and practices of the cult, study of the science of magic and religious formulas, fabrication and consecration of protective charms (boli-w, dyo-w), knowledge of [85] poisons and antidotes, procedures for combating enemies and sorcerers.

794 Its moral authority is very widespread, and we shall see the
796 role it plays in justice and public affairs. The Komo has obligatory seasonal ceremonies, such as the festival of the cleaning of the sacred wood by the tinto-w (most recent initiates), the festival of the emergence of the komo-sen-w from the stream, that of stream fishing and of hunting on the banks at the end of the dry season, and, finally, that of the solemn return of the komo-sen-w to the stream. In addition, every seven years, a great celebration in April-May lasts for 15 days, with a sacrifice to the komo-ba. The ceremony ends with
[766] the nomination of a new komo-tigi (chief of the Komo), who will exercise his priesthood for seven years. He must die at the end of

that period; his body will not be buried but will be carried off by members of the Komo, who will take it to a crossroads and crush it with the aid of komo-se-w [sic]. The remains will be hidden in a secret place. The same treatment is accorded to the komo-tigi who dies during his seven-year term.

The cult is cantonal, and the various komo-tigi take their orders from their colleagues of the capital. The cult formerly was interlcan and intertribal. Labouret (Les Mandingues et leur langue [The Mandingo and Their Language]) has made a table of the seven categories of persons who make up the hierarchical society of the initiates.

After initiation into the Komo cult, a natural sequel to circumcision, the young man may, if he so desires, be initiated into other cults. He then enters a powerful spiritual family which unites all its members by ties of brotherhood. This brotherhood is superimposed on the normal social hierarchy of the flã̃-tõ̃ [this term is probably the same as flanton]. The chief of the brotherhood is entitled nyama-tigi; he is generally a man of caste or a slave. He acquires his position as chief either by inheriting it, by election, or by founding a new cult. To do this latter, he must buy an altar, gna, from the village or from the brotherhood that already possesses this cult. Such a purchase is considered a marriage with the gna and is accompanied by drinking. The higher-ranking initiates (dyenfaw: masters of the truth) are auxiliaries of the nyama-tigi and participate in the oracle, wara-da. All the initiates are more or less divine. The clergy includes, in addition, a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and a dyeli, herald of the god. To become one of the faithful, one must pay an entrance fee and swear an oath of secrecy, obedience, and fellowship. The clergy manages the cult's treasury which is fed by the entrance fees to the brotherhood, by fees levied for a class promotion, by contributions required for the major ceremonies, and by fines imposed on the members.

The brotherhood is a spiritual family which is organized in a fashion similar to the natural filiation of the community. The nyama-tigi plays the role of the fa; the dyen-fa-w and the notable members form a sort of council for settling, with the chief, all questions. The cult does nothing on Mondays and Thursdays, the work holidays.

304 The Bambara decorate their faces and bodies with numerous
773 scarifications, with the aim of conferring on the wearer the qualities symbolized by the scars. By their influence on the character and temperament of an individual, they help him to come up to the ideal man. These marks are associated with the myth of the origin of agriculture They are eight small scars: two vertical ones at the root of the nose, three under each eye. They imitate the facial marks of the mythical being, half man, half animal, who taught men how to cultivate the soil. (1)

1. S. de Ganay, "On a form of cicatrisation among the Bambara," Man.

f. Arrangement of the Settlements

361 The Bambara village follows rules of development which allow a stranger to recognize the disposition of the huts immediately and to single out a chief's house, that of a blacksmith, or that of any other member of the society. In fact, the village is built to the north or east of the protective tree. To the south of the village, is the sacred wood, dwelling place of the chief of the spirits, where the religious ceremonies and the initiation rites take place. As more families come to live in the village, they build their huts around that of the chief, except to the east, for the chief must see the sun rise. The oldest son of the chief, his eventual successor, will have his own plot near his father's. The house of the Komo is situated outside of the village, to the south or west, hidden in a wood or a thicket. At the edge of the village is a round cabin, the house of the Nyama, in the middle is a square cabin with painted walls, house of the Gna (see the chapter on religion). In the center of the village, a cleared place around a doubalé serves for public meetings; the elders hold their councils under the branches of the doubalé.

764 [100] Finally, the cemetery of the free men is found outside the
554 village, to the west; that of captives and people of caste is to the south of the free men's cemetery.

326 Every village has its blacksmith, for he is life, and the vil-
600 lage could not subsist without him. Before the French conquest,

Before the French conquest,

712 Bambara villages were fortified. They were protected by a triple enclosure of clay blocks following a line of beams that sheltered the sentinels. The first wall enclosed the village and the surrounding gardens, the second circled the interior of the village, and the third surrounded the chief's houses. These walls could be as high as five meters and as wide as two meters at the base. They had a ditch in front of them and were re-inforced by steps. Considerable ruins of these fortifications may still be seen in the Kourolamini at Ténintu (Bougouni circle).

342 House construction. (1) Throughout the Sudan, house construction is carried out during the dry season. The same is true for repairs, except for the most urgent caused by damage from rains, streaming waters, violent winds, or by the ravages of termites.

1. Information, in part, given by Moussa Traoré, from the village of Gouani (Diemandougou canton), Bamako circle.

342 361 787 778 Choice of the site. The choice is often made near a temporary or permanent watercourse where wells may be sunk. A soothsayer or Marabout is next consulted, who reveals the existence of a spirit whose favorite place is the cailcedra; if the spirit is benevolent, the installation is authorized, and the sacred tree becomes the altar of the collectivity. It is bathed with periodic sacrifices.

342 Types of habitation. 1. The round hut with thatched roof (tuba bo); 2 the square or rectangular hut (bili) with flat roof.

Round hut. The man drives a stake to which he attaches a cord 1.50 meters long at the most, which is also tied to the head of [401] a hoe. The man circles the stake and traces a circumference that will be the scheme of the house. No foundation is laid. A series of double pickets (kassassin) is set up around the circumference. A bamboo strip is passed in and out between the double stakes, and this basketwork is raised from the ground up to a height of about two meters.

When the cylinder forming the walls of the base is finished, a door is cut, facing south, 25 centimeters from the ground and 1.50 meters high. One then plasters with banco, that is, with earth dug not far from the hut by the young people and made into a paste with a mixture of fonio straw, cow dung, and water drawn by the women. The roof is constructed on the ground. A circumference equal to that

lineages, they usually abandon such a taboo as soon as they leave the village, and if, because of the habit they have acquired they abide by it until their death, their children give it up.

Carrying his organization into the world of invisible beings, the Bambara endows the latter also with tné, or taboos, and make these his own. Not only are the sacred woods taboo, together with all they contain, but there are also ways of acting and behaving which displease the spirits, and some animals have the capability of making them angry. When a woman comes back from the forest with her fagot of wood on her head, she must unbind it before entering the village or do so on the public square. In some places shoes are removed at the door of the entrance hut, or b'lon through which the village is entered; elsewhere the people take off their caps; and no one ever whistles in the lanes without incurring the hatred of the invisible beings. Partridges, which are numerous in the fields around the walls, must never get into the village except dead and plucked, and children who catch them in their nets never break this custom. [187] If by mischance a partridge flies across the village and cackles in passing, all the population is in turmoil, and for three nights thereafter men, women, and children sleep under the stars. Often, /25/ depending on the oracles of the sorcerer, they even leave their homes and build them again a short distance away.

The genii called boli are the terror of women, children, and the uninitiated, who cannot touch any object used in the ritual and who may not enter their sacred woods and their sanctuaries. The boli (1) have tné, which are taboo for their owners and those that

1. The term boli denotes any evil fetish, and hence any object used by an evil spirit or demon as his dwelling. See Chap. VII, 1.

sacrifice to them, and which sometimes also become taboo for their children. One of the strangest is the tné or taboo of the Bara, which is millet beer, or d'lo. Its owner and the person sacrificing to him must avoid drinking beer if possible, and if the habit is too established

776 among them, they take a complete bath before touching the fetish
784 or sacrificing to it. Usually the tné of the boli is an animal, and the
778 whole family takes it for their own. A palm rat, succulent as it may be to a Bambara palate, will never be eaten by the owners of Bama-n-djigi and their children: it is the tné, or taboo, of the fetish.

784 I have found no tné for animals, but many trees have them, as do medicinal plants, and when these must be used for particular purposes, they must not be placed in contact with, whatever they abhor or are supposed to detest and which in the eyes of the black man is nothing less than their tné, or taboo.

Men and women, young and old, must venerate and respect their tné and those of the genii, and even children know from their earliest years that they cannot see, kill, or eat a certain animal, that they cannot touch, cut, or break a given tree or plant, without incurring either the curse of the ancestor or the anger of the genie and losing their sight.

The severity of the punishments which hang over every Black who forgets the respect due to the tné (especially to his lineage tné and those of the boli fetishes), and hence the fear of incurring them, seems at first quite tyrannical. It is not as great as one would think, however, since the Bambara is a very good casuist when his person and his interests are at stake, and all the prohibitions except those against consuming certain /26/ meats and certain drinks are but a game.

For example, a Dambelé who sees a band of black monkeys ruining his fields and stealing his crops does nothing to stop his dogs from chasing them, and if a friend of an outside lineage comes to help and shoots them, he will have no regrets. A greater confidence is shown by a Djara when a lion ravages his herds: he goes to meet it and begs it to go away, which, according to the Black it always does.

784 When the carcass of a taboo /sic/ is found by one of the people
760 of the lineage which it protects, it usually receives the honors of burial. The Djara, whose tné is the lion, even perform the burial with ceremony: the women weep, the drums beat, and the men offer the lion a piece of cloth, in which it is rolled before being put in the grave.

784 One might perhaps think that it would be very difficult not to
602 see one's tné. . . .? In the Sudan good manners require that people
576 discipline their glances from their earliest years. A son-in-law lowers his eyes in the presence of his mother-in-law, a daughter-in-law turns her back at a three-quarters angle out of modesty in the presence of her father-in-law, and when a lover goes to win over the father of his fiancée, she runs away and hides. Any Negro, however poor his manners, will direct his look no one knows where, into space or upon his toes, every time he greets anyone and hears his news, and will chat with a person for a quarter hour without ever looking at him. No more is asked for the tné. Undoubtedly a Bambara shields himself with both hands in its presence... and he plays the young daughter-in-law; he knows well how to differentiate between seeing and looking, and he knows how to tell you at the time, however little he is accused: "Né y'a yé tigné, n'ka, nè gné tount'a la, né m'a flè. I saw it certainly, but I did not leave my eyes on it, I did not look at it."

3. The Gnâma

789 The tné are rendered sacred, above all, by the curse of the
778 ancestor. Nothing is so much feared by the Bambara. To be cursed,
626 and cursed by his father, is the greatest evil that can befall a man; his wives would run away from him, his children would blush to call him "father," his /27/ friends would abandon him, the people of the village would be terrified to speak to him; he would have to flee. And where would he go? The gnâma of his father, of his ancestor, of his fetish's tné, would cling to his steps and follow him everywhere. Only suffering would be left for him; sickness, hunger, poverty, and humiliation would be his lot and, rejected by humanity, he would die in despair.

789 The word gnâma is very difficult to translate. Does its equivalent
778 exist in our French language? Gnâma is a force, a power, or also perhaps a /kind of/ energy, a fluid possessed by every man, every animal, every living being; it never disappears and continues to exist even

789 after death. This energy, this fluid, is the envoy, messenger, or
778 emissary of hatred, vengeance, and justice, and it goes wherever it is sent by the will which is its director and master; it goes wrongly or rightly to bring misfortune, poverty, sickness, and death. The word gnâma is constantly heard from Bambara lips.

789 The song of young girls who have been excised begins with
778 these words:

304 Bo n' yé, gnâma, o gnâma, bo n' yé!
539 Go away from me, gnâma, oh, gnâma, go away from me!
Dankoun bâ la
(i.e., Gnâma who dwell) at the great corner of land formed by two paths that cross.
Gnâma fambali, bo n' yé!
Gnama who kill, go away from me! (1)

1. Translation: "Go away from me, all kinds of gnâma, who dwell at the big dankoun (a corner of land formed by two paths that fork, intersect, or cross at the exit from the village)! Gnâma who kill, go away from me!"

789 The ears of those who consult sorcerers have had their fill of
778 this word: Gnâma djougou bi é nofé. A malicious gnâma is chasing you, so avoid this and that, kill a goat, a chicken, or a dog, place a gift of cowrie shells, a kola nut, etc... in a certain place. Nonté i fa gnâma na ouli i la, otherwise the gnâma, the avenging force possessed by your father, will rise up against you.

Always, the word gnâma carries this meaning of a force, a power, a fluid that causes sickness, suffering, and death. The following proverb alone expresses much of its meaning: Ni warani-n-kala ko, /28/ ka fa, gnâma si dé t'o la. If the panther (a tyrant as wicked as a panther) says, "Let us kill him," we surely have no gnâma to set against him (no force or energy that we might set against him as a counterbalance to the force of his gnâma).

789 778 825 753 Animals also have gnâma, and the gnâma of birds are among those most feared. By preference, they attack little children, who die in convulsions as a result; it is impossible to mistake the cause of their illness and death, since the hands and feet of the child curl up like a bird's claws. Birds are thought to be especially wicked in winter time, undoubtedly because they nest, find plenty of food, and [751] are big, fat, and vigorous. During that season mothers tie around the necks of nursing infants a string that has nine knots in it, which places them under the protection of their gnâma. Birds keep their gnâma even when dead, and I remember that in November or December, 1907, all the village of Songhobougou attributed a small influenza epidemic to the death of a big black bird (the djougo), which a European killed in one of their fields. "We have pains in our kidneys, we have pains in our throats, and we cough," they said dismally, "and the hunter is to blame for it all. Toubabou ko tɛ́ vva? A ye djougo do fa en ka forola, djougo gnâma do.... It is the European's fault, he killed a djougo in our fields and we are weighed down with gnâma." /29/

Chapter 2

Animism and Its Consequences

1. The Beliefs about Spirits

776 The Bambara has not deified the forces of nature. Although in some instances he shows them respect and fears them, he leaves them without priest, /sacrificial/ victim, or altar: he is not a "nature worshipper" in the strict sense of the word; his true religion is animism. His spiritualism knows no bounds and he sees genii just about everywhere. The bush is full of these spirits; they lodge in the trees or lounge astride branches; they run around the outskirts of villages; splash in ponds and wells; they pull themselves onto high rocks,

152 After all, what can one do about an evil that cannot be exorcised except to bear it? What can one do against a powerful being that cannot be disarmed? Nevertheless, in the depth of his being he feels a need to enjoy himself (and enjoyment for him consists in drinking, eating, sleeping, and procreating); therefore he feels a horror of all suffering and neglects nothing that can protect him from it. In order
751 to live in peace, he reddens everything a little with blood and covers
789 his body with grigris or good-luck charms, with talismans that change the course of things and even of nature, and lastly amulets which will forearm him against poison, help him avoid an accident, cause the sorcery of the malicious to miscarry, send away the gnâma of the genii, of the living and the dead, and prevent the unknown forces which are found more or less everywhere in nature from taking hold of the wearer. For this protection they address themselves to the priests of the djiné and the boli, and especially to the sorcerers who have close contacts with the genii and are the mediators between man and the entire invisible world.

776 Since the Bambara conceived the visible and invisible world as
782 similar to what he believes himself to be, he has come to believe quite naturally and without any effort that the genii can be seen and conversed with their language understood and, finally, that it is possible to subjugate the forces of nature and hold them in one's power. By making offerings and sacrifices or causing them to be made through the intermediary of a priest, he can win a spirit's favor and thus lessen his fears and terrors. But if the spirit is weak, they will be ready to withdraw their attentions; it must be equal to the one feared and if possible outdo it.

● 778 It is force, or, to use their term, fanga, that governs each
791 person's conduct toward his neighbor; to be obeyed, a man must first cause himself to be feared, and only a powerful man will succeed and see everything yield before him. /34/

The Negroes have seen people of low birth and poor family succeed in increasing their property and become rich to the point of where they have servants and slaves and dominate a whole village, a whole tribe, or a whole people. Since they like to reason from

718 comparisons with themselves, they have thought that certain individuals could also create understandings in the world of spirits, and thus become the spirits' equals and even command them and make them obey. They firmly believe that such is the case, and although there are many sorcerers, there are still more people who maneuver to attain this position. Possession of the occult sciences cannot be acquired by anyone who wishes, however. The diploma or certificate of competence, cannot be obtained without swallowing certain mixtures of ashes, intestines, and blood, and certain repulsive eyewashes, such as the rheum from dogs' eyes, must be slid under the eyelids in order to see the invisible beings. In addition, unless a man is initiated by his father or brother, he must expect to pay a goodly sum. This is an art that pays, and generously! Every aspirant must also have a good memory in order to engrave in his mind the formulas, gestures, and rites; only the intelligent succeed.

791 The competence of sorcerers is far from equal, nor do they
787 proceed in an identical manner. Some read the future and discover secrets in the entrails of hens; others play with knuckle bones, pebbles, or cowrie shells (1) which they throw on the ground and count and

[436]

1. /Torn page/ white /shells/ ~~used~~ as money.

recount, or trace cabalistic signs on scattered ashes, moving the forefinger back and forth, as in a game of Goose /a game played with dice on a board/. Some work with a gourd three quarters full of water, which they set on a n'gô (a kind of napkin ring or bracelet made of braided roots) washed frequently in the blood of /sacrificial/ victims. This procedure is the least complicated. The gourd is tipped right and left, forward and backward, until it sits firmly on the n'gô and can no longer be moved without carrying the stand along. Then the operator need only flick it three times with the middle finger of the right hand while stating the petitions..., and the spirit will answer in a soft murmur which those present can hear, but which he alone
791 understands. In a word, the /35/ good sorcerer stands out above the

4. The dja

774 778 Here again is a word very difficult to translate into our French language. We use dja to translate the words "phantoms," "pictures," "photographs," "shadows," "that which is reflected by water or by a mirror"; but there are other meanings, and there is no question of shadows or images in the following sentences, for example: a dja tikéra, a dja oulila, misiou dja oulila. They mean: "he is afraid," "he is crazed," "the cows are crazed." In the eyes of the Bambara, the dja is not only the shadow, the image, or the outline of objects, it is also that which makes them manifest. It is a force, a power common to beings of all kinds, and even though it cannot be compared to a genie or a soul, they nevertheless think of it as a kind of being which they are unable to define but which has its own existence and can act of its own accord.

[791] 774 784 The gné-fla, whom I mentioned when speaking of the souba, are feared because they see the genii and our private thoughts, and also because they practice sympathetic magic, by taking possession of that which makes the shadows of persons and things. The Bambara is convinced that his dja can be taken, and when this occurs he henceforth no longer casts a shadow. Although, because of their fear of the Europeans and in some cases because they have long been in contact with them, the Bambara may readily pose before a camera, one can nevertheless say that, in general, they do not like to be photographed. Particularly the old people object and begin to resist /42/ as soon as they see a lens. They have the notion in their heads that their dja will escape from them to make an imprint on the plate and leave its form there, and that this form will comprise the portrait, thus placing a part of their being in the hands of the operator and themselves at his mercy. They fear lest, as a result, they lose their [828] shadows and the ability to cast them, and thus become idiots.

774 Even though the Bambara cannot explain their ideas on this subject, these closely resemble the theories of Mr. de Rochas, discussed by Monseigneur Méric in Volume II of his work, Imagination et Prodiges /Imagination and Marvels/ /Paris, 1905/. The dja is something similar to what English psychologists call a double and

761 "Koroya do, it is old age," but let us allow them to finish their sentences and continue their thoughts "a ko toun kadi Komo yé, he was beloved by the Komo," -- "à ko toun kadi Kono yé, Nama yé, Douga ye, he was beloved by the Kono, the Nama, the Douga," etc.

761 When people pass by holding a rooster or hen by the feet one
782 may wonder where they are going; if one follows, one finds that they
776 are going to the temple of a fetish, there to sacrifice and to redden their god with blood. "A toun koromé Alla séra à ma, he was old and God came to him," is an expression which is rarely on Bambara lips. When it is heard, it is used with a very special meaning; it signifies that the old man in question was a good man, beloved by all, even by God, but by no means that God killed him. The sacrifices made on this occasion clearly demonstrate this, for they are all directed to a fetish. If God alone were the cause and not the fetishes, the family of the deceased would refrain from all sacrifice; at the very most, it would offer a saraka by order of a sorcerer, but even the saraka offered to God -- and they are offered to Him -- is not a sacrifice, as we shall see later.

761 The priests of a djiné fetish and the owners and priests of a boli
778 fetish have the consolation that they always fall under the blows of the genie which they hold and to which they sacrifice. As for other mortals, 80 times out of 100, and one might say even more without exaggerating, they are killed by a boli fetish. The Komo, Kono, Nia, Nama, and Douga fetishes etc., are the chief murderers, and entire villages are often decimated by them.

761 Although they are able to deliver blows on their own initiative,
578 they are often only intermediaries, the agents of a depraved will to
674 which they have offered their services; almost always there is either a thrown poison, korti, or a poison that is poured, dounkono. Thus
754 sorcerors are consulted at every death; one is sought through their mediation. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the great maxim for the Bambara as for the Jews, and vengeance must be taken on the one who was able to win over the good graces of a fetish and force it to bring suffering or mourning into the bosom of a family. This vengeance is obtained through the intermediary of a fetish, and

754 all functions to some degree, and it is to his own advantage to be con-
674 tent, in such an instance, with the position of solicitor; to whoever
/52/ consults him, he indicates a celebrated fetish in the hands of one
of his friends. The Bambara runs there without delay, and the master
of the fetish, generously and heavily paid, takes the god out of its
[778] dirty goatskin. Onto one of its instruments (for a boli is manifold, and
horns of cattle and antelopes, varnished with blood and brownish in
color, are mingled with other objects in the shape of an eggplant, a
turnip, a beetroot, a napkin ring, horse dung, etc., etc.), onto the
sirikoun, which is almost always wrapped in a red shirt front, he ties
firmly with a cotton thread seven straws five to seven centimeters
long. The petitioner explains his visit, names the enemy on whom
he wants to take vengeance, gives the reasons that compel him, and
the master of the fetish recites his formulas, reddens his sirikoun with
blood, and plasters onto its sides some spittle containing chewed kola
nut.

754 If the sacrificial hen dies with spread wings and breast on the
674 ground and if when split in half the kola nut falls with the pulp down
787 and the round side up, the contemplated revenge is put off until later,
for it is believed that the sacrifice has not been accepted. Our
Bambara then goes away, relieved of a hen, two kola nuts, and at
least 160 cauri, but nowise defeated; eight or ten days later he returns
to the charge, unless he is too impatient to wait and consults a new
sorcerer, who gives him orders to appeal to a fetish that shows a greater
interest and has a more enterprising and less timid disposition.

If the hen dies on its side or on its back with its feet in the air,
and if the pieces of kola nut fall on the round side with the pulp on
top, the sacrifice is accepted, and this is the god's answer to the
effect that he is taking his client's side. The enemy is thenceforth
754 placed under the boli a blara boli koro, the sanctioned expression;
674 he is placed under the avenging power of the fetish and is in its hands,
278 and the master of the idol, the sacrificer, and the people in his retinue
plot to make him disappear at once. They undertake the task them-
selves as seldom as possible, however; they prescribe sacrifices and
offerings to the client and give him a deer horn carefully tied up,
telling him how to use it. This deer horn is nothing less than a horn

2. The saraka

782 Europeans -- civilian, military, or of the church -- easily confuse a saraka with a sacrifice, no matter how much they know of Bambara ways and customs. They do not even see that there is a difference, since sometimes it involves the shedding of blood. But even a bloody saraka is not a sacrifice; I even deny it the name of offering, for it is a tax, a tribute, and in my opinion that is the only appropriate name for it.

782 791 Private or public, with or without bloodshed, it is always performed on the express order of a sorcerer who, as we know, has intimate relations with the world of spirits and learns from them what the Divinity demands. When a sorcerer speaks and gives his oracles they are obeyed and carried out, so greatly are his threats feared, and it is all done "djakoyola, because forced." The saraka is given under his orders as the tax is given to the head of the circle.

782 778 In the eyes of the Bambara the saraka has no other character than that of a tax, a tribute paid either to the Divinity or to the fetishes. In February, 1907 the rumor spread in the villages around Ségou that the Komo fetish of Sioribougou had spoken. "Quick, give Death a hen through me in a saraka," the fetish said. "It is preparing to decimate you, and the only way left for you to disarm it is to give it a hen." The sorcerers confirmed this folly, the masters of the Komo found it to their taste, and not one head of a family dared refuse the hen that Death demanded. So they offered it, and the formula on this occasion was this: "The Komo of Sioribougou has ordered us to offer /64/ Death a white hen as a saraka. Komo, so-and-so makes this offering for himself and his family through your mediation; it is his saraka. If the wind blows from the east, may this hen preserve him from it! If it blows from the west, may it also preserve him! If the wind blows from the Ouorodougou (the country of the kola nut, the south), may this hen deliver him from it, and if it blows from the north may it deliver him from it also!" Cutting the hen's throat, the sacrificer of the Komo then added, reddening his fetish: "This is a saraka, the saraka which so-and-so gives to Death on behalf of himself, his wives, his children, and his friends.

782 The Komo of Sioribougou has ordered us to do this; its mother,
778 M'gouni Domba, informed it that we owe this saraka to Death."

782 The saraka, a term derived from the Arabic word (صدقة) meaning "alms," is no less than compulsory giving of alms to God, the djine genii, or to ancestors upon orders of a sorcerer; it really is a tax, a tribute which cannot be avoided and which is offered and presented (1) to the invisible beings.

1. Saraka di, "to give a saraka,"
is the Bambara expression.

A saraka is in no way a sacrifice, even when it involves bloodshed. Cutting the throat of a hen, a dog, or a kid does not in itself constitute a sacrifice, for otherwise we would have to conclude that every butcher and every cook sacrifices. He who cuts the throats must have the intention of making a sacrifice, and this intention is so essential that it is always expressed by the Negroes: "soni do, this is a sacrifice," he says as he makes the knife thrust. In performing a saraka, it is important for the officiant to say that he is not sacrificing, so he expresses his intention in the words: "saraka do, this is a saraka," and all present repeat after him: "saraka do, this is a saraka."

In every sacrifice there is a priest, and the responsibility is especially entrusted to him, but in the saraka there is no priest strictly speaking. Doubtless when a saraka is given by a village or a family, the head of the village or of the family is asked to officiate, but this is done out of deference, or by necessity if the saraka involved is given indirectly through the mediation of a fetish. In the case of a direct saraka the sorcerer himself can designate the person who should give it, and anyone, man or woman, is eligible; they need only be either circumcised or excised. Obviously, a woman is /65/ never [562] chosen for a public saraka. Where a man is available, a woman must step aside, and in order to safeguard the principles of the hierarchy, a respected old man, an elder, is chosen in the absence of a priest.

At the end of a public sacrifice the sacrificer usually receives a choice morsel and the skin of the animal, and those present roast

776 177 198 out of the Bambara's need to soften their crime of idolatry and to preserve it by lending it extenuating circumstances. If the cradle of Islam is Mecca, if its superiority is derived from the holiness of that city, chosen and beloved by God (1), what can the Moslems want of

1. See what I said above on the subject of Mecca and Stamboul.

him, the Bambara, whose religion comes from this same much vaunted city? And if the God of Whom the Moslems preached to the Bambara has decreed everything (2), good and evil, if He is the Author of both

2. See the Koran: VI, v. 3 - 39; X, v. 99; XIV, v. 4; XVII, v. 32; XXXVI, v. 6, 7, 8, 9; LIII, v. 43, 44, 45 - 49; LXXVI, v. 29; LXXX, v. 29; etc.

good and evil and leads each person along the course that pleases Him to such a degree that he no longer has freedom of choice, why wish to take from them that which God has given them, that which comes to them from the holy city of Mecca!

776 796 782 [192] The Bambara term for the boli is gna. Their idea of them corresponds closely to the Arab concept of the chéitane شيطان, and in everyday language, they define them by a single word: sétané, "satan," even though this word is never on their lips in the sacrifices. In their nocturnal orgies and religious dances, the Negroes' notion of the genie to which they are sacrificing are shown in concrete form. And when, in their religious ceremonies in honor of the Komo, Kono, [178] Nama, etc., the spirit appears by the glow of little fires lit in the sacred woods, decked out in a cloak of feathers, his head hidden in a huge horned mask that has nothing human about it, one cannot help 776 796 thinking of the tales of old Breton grandmothers, told on a winter evening in the stables. The blasting of trumpets, bamboos, and koba 534 782 horns (3), the tinkling of /72/ the little bell, and the shouts of the

888 child, woman, or young man that can tell you the name of the great
793 sacrificer of the village if the latter is in the least old. Out of respect
576 and veneration his name is never spoken; he is the head, and if they
551 are questioned all will answer: "Toua si t'a la dougoutigi ko, he has no other name than that of dougoutigi, head of the village." And, in fact, most of the people know no other name for him.

551 This need to avoid speaking the name of whosoever is respected,
576 venerated, or feared goes so far as to bring about the abbreviation of
●779 phrases customarily used in salutations (1), so it can easily be imagined

1. See what I said in this connection in the preceding chapter, /section on/ "Reincarnation of Souls," pertaining to Ouentja.

that the name of the fetishes is not known except by their masters and their initiates. Of course, a Moslem, a woman, an uncircumcised man, or an unexcised woman can tell you the number of the gnéna and gnâ owned by the village, and they also know whether the gnéna (djiné) include a Dasiri, Ngolo, Koté, Ntomo, Tauri, etc., and whether the gnâ (boli, sétané) include a Komo, Nia, Douga, Kono, Nama, Bala, etc. But except for the initiates, who could tell you that a certain boli is called Sélé, Magné, Toroba, Dono, or Nono, or that the Magna is also called Tjarofign and the Nama, Sirima-n-fign? Only the generic name is known, and it is in good taste not to pronounce even that when extending an invitation to a festival in its honor. The Nama is enclosed in a beehive in the shade of a tamarind tree, which in turn are enclosed in coarse mats, and when an invitation is given to the sacrifice, the most stylish formula is: "Come and see us, an bi djasé (2) son, we are sacrificing to the /81/ palisade." The trumpet

2. Djasé, name of a palisade composed of large mats. Children born at the time of the sacrifices to the Nama, who are dedicated to the fetish, are frequently given the name

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Djasé instead of Nama or Namakoro, The Nama is sometimes surrounded by a wall instead of mats. This is extremely unusual, and I have seen only one sanctuary of this kind, at Dougoutigila in the Bani /region/.

of the Komo is of iron, so one says: "An bi nége son, we are sacrificing to the iron." A fetish can give health in the sense that it can refrain from causing sickness if it is a gnâ, or it can actually give health and well-being if it is a gnéna; thus the expression used most frequently is: "An ta foura bi son, we are sacrificing to our cure," or again: "An ta foura bi djigi so, our cure is paying us the honor of a visit."

776 Are we here dealing with a recent custom, which dates from the arrival of the Moslem? I cannot accept this idea, for all the evidence indicates that it antedates presence; I believe without hesitation that the name of the Divinity or Supreme Being was never spoken by the Bambara, that they were not permitted to pronounce it. It is not surprising, then, that the name should gradually have been lost, erased from their memories so that it is unknown at present.

Moreover, since the Bambara God was without priest, altar, or sacrifice, was there any need to speak His name? According to their ideas, the gnéna or djiné are beings intermediate between men and angels, put in charge of the elements by the Divinity and delegated by Him to distribute His favors and His punishments to human beings; would it then be foolish and presumptuous to believe that since the beginning he only addressed God through the mediation of the gnéna or djiné? I cannot doubt that the Bambara implored the djiné to present their homage and worship to their Lord, the Lord of the whole universe, to their Tigi ani fen bê tigi yé, as the sorcerers always say in their liturgical ceremonies. The latter are the watchful guardians of the ancient formulas and customs; that is the source of all their prestige.

Moreover, the worship of the gnéna, or djiné, antedates that of the gnâ (boli or sétané). It has no history; its origin is lost in the darkness of the ages, and in this fact I see a new reason to believe that they were the first intermediaries between man and God.

869 794 778 In addition to wearing the costume, which is white (n'tomo djé) or yellow, black, etc. (n'tomo fign), the boy who dances the dance of the genie hides his face in a frightful wooden mask on top of which are five, seven, and sometimes eight horns.

869 794 561 The n'tomo injects a whole organization into the world of children. They quite naturally divide themselves into small groups, each corresponding to a circumcision that is to take

[291 293]

Child wearing the loincloth called yaba.

place, and are thus all of the same age, born in the same year, or very nearly so. The member of each group who is the oldest -- be it by only one day -- becomes its head, and all the younger heads obey the head of the oldest group, the n'tomotigi, and his aide, the n'tomotigi siéré (1), who is drawn from

1. Siéré, "aide," "deputy."

the group which will be circumcised after that

869 of the n'tomotigi. /93/

794 These two children prepare the hunts for rats and lizards, or-
561 ganize the games and supervise them, and if an offence is committed by the band, it is up to them to discover the culprit. When quarrels, arguments, and fights arise among the children, they intervene, judge each case, and, if the matter is worth the trouble, the mischief-maker, or the one who is declared responsible, is severely beaten. All this

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Mask of the n'tomo, the children's fetish.

produces unity within the various groups and prevents them from coming to blows at every moment.

The little girls also have an organization into groups, but it lacks cohesion; it would have to be religious in nature, since religion is the basis of all unity in the Bambara country. Only at the time of excision does all this change, and then there is real cohesion among them.

796 Every year children sacrifice to the n'tomo genie through the
857 mediation of their head, the n'tomotigi. The day of the sacrifice is a day of great rejoicing which ends in flagellation. The material for

796 the sacrifice is furnished by the children themselves; all of them to-
857 gether work a small field for this purpose during the winter, and if the harvest is not sufficient, they go begging from door to door so that nothing will be lacking at the feast -- neither d'lo, the millet beer, nor kola nuts. On the evening of this great day, each new initiate chooses his n'golo mouso, as they call the little girl each one takes as his "sister of the heart," his bonne amie as one would say in France /his girlfriend/. But she is more; she is a little maid of all work, and the gift which he gives her every year at the celebration is more a payment than a gift of friendship, "pure and simple." /94/

7. The Genie Protector of Circumcised Youths

794 At circumcision the Bambara leave the association of the n'tomo
776 and place themselves under the protection of more powerful genii.
● 778 These genii are all of the same nature, only the name differs with each region, and all the confraternities are copied after one and the same model. The most widespread is that of the n'golo (1).

1. In Bani it is the n'goso rather than the n'golo.

The n'golo is nothing but two forked branches fastened together and hung on a light dloma (2). One can meet it quite often in a

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2. Dloma are forked sticks on which rest the crossbars or beams that hold up the flat terrace roofs. The name dloma is given to all forked sticks, small and large.

corner of the village, out of doors, but usually it is under a small shed or hut. This genie gives the youths not only strength, vigor, and health, but also the talent, if not of pleasing women, at least of attracting them and thus being able to obtain some crude satisfactions. It helps the unmarried to meet the girl of the moment, and thanks to it,

794 a married man finds his wife gentle, submissive, and obedient. It
776 preserves the members from disgraceful ailments and, in a quite
778 special manner, from ma ko sa (3), a paralysis of the reproductive

3. Ma, "man"; ko, "affair," "parts," "testicles"; sa, "dead," "lifeless."

organ.

794 This group of worshippers forms the foundation of the organization of the fla-n-to (4), headed by the to-n-tigi (5) who is the master of

4. To, "gruel"; fla, "for"; flani, "twins of the same age."

5. To, "gruel"; tigi, "head."

the n'golo fetish. His assistants before the genie help him with his duties; he has a siéré, or aide, a djéli, who is a kind of herald and repeats his orders, advice, and thanks during the days of celebration and drinking bouts, and a djalatiké, responsible for seeing that the rules or laws of the organization are kept. Among the Negroes nothing is done without drinking and eating; they must have celebrations and drinking bouts, and in order to obtain the means for them the fla-n-to impose a large number of fines on their members, the to-n-dé (6).

6. To; "gruel"; "child."

Their rules are /95/ nevertheless odd. For example, a fine is imposed on whoever blows his nose or sneezes, gets up from the table, or starts eating before commanded to do so by the head, the tontigi. Those who are late for the dance or sleep during the day or night of a celebration are granted no mercy! (1) .

1. When the tondé organize a dance or celebration, everyone must be present and spend a sleepless night.

9. The Twins' Genie

845 776 Having twins is far from an unmixed blessing for Bambara women. Those whom I have seen afflicted with this good fortune and honor (for it is one, since it is regarded as /97/ a blessing from the Supreme Being, the Creator) have seemed to me greatly inconvenienced by their two babies. The healthier, stronger and more robust of the two relaxes pleasantly on the mother's back, while the one who needs a little care always gets his belly squashed on one shoulder or the other.

845 776 778 1235 The genie of twins lives in a kind of hourglass made of two plates of braided grass; a bit of iron or wood onto which a piece of the umbilical cord has been rolled is hung from the centers. This fetish is called a sinsin and costs the father between 1 ba and 1 ba 200 cowrie shells (between 800 and 1200 cowrie shells, or 20 to 25 sous), not including, of course, the hens and kola nuts given to the sinsin tigi (1), more commonly called sinsin d'la tigi (2). To make this

1. Sinsin, the fetish bearing this name; tigi, "master," "owner."

2. Sinsin, the fetish; d'la, "maker"; tigi, "master," "He who manufactures the sinsin."

/98/ horror, which is hung in the entrance hut within an inverted gourd (1), one must own a father sinsin fetish and know the rites and

1. This gourd protects the sinsin from the teeth of rodents.

formulas.

A sacrifice to the sinsin is performed every year by the head of the family, who is himself its priest; the sacrifice continues to be made even in case of the death of the twins, because it is the

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778 peculiarity of this fetish that it continues to live in its hourglass as
778 long as a particle of this object remains.

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Young Bambara holding the sinsin, the fetish of twins

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431 This fetish protects the mother of the twins, and unites the latter in such close affection that one never receives a gift without sharing it with the other. I would even go so far as to say that it is in good taste never to offer anything to one without offering as much to the other, and when they are given something, the first to be favored is the last born, who is considered by everyone as the older.

845 If one of the twins dies early in life, as usually happens, the
778 survivor receives a statuette which he keeps all his life with jealous
431 care and to which he gives the name of the deceased. He dresses it to the best of his ability, often covers it with glass trinkets, such as bangles, beads, bits of amber, rings, etc., and well-bred people never give him a gift without adding at least 5 cowrie shells for the statuette.

845 The sinsin also grants twins a curious privilege. A scorpion not
778 only cannot bite them, it is even at their service, and on their order
825 will bite a fellow who has displeased them.

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A twins' doll.

845 It is easy to recognize twins (flani in Bambara) as they have
551 special names, the commonest being Sinna, Maféné, Gno, and Ouassa. /99/

10. The Genie Protector of Villages

776 The genie protector of a village lives on a knoll or a rock;
621 almost always, if not invariably, its home is a baobab or false cedar near the walls, in a little grove intersected by neat paths, well kept and often raked.

796 825 782 A great sacrifice to the spirit protector of the village, the dasiri, is made every year. The spirit always has a mount such as a snake, a rat, a lizard, a donkey, etc.; almost everywhere the mount is a terrible billy goat that roams through the village, enters everywhere, eats everything, and breaks everything without paying attention to the switch. For at least three days at the time of the sacrifice, the village makes merry; men, women, and children dance, stuff themselves with food, and drink and get drunk.

796 782 Just as everyone takes part in the feasting and drinking, so all participate in the sacrifice, even the women, who at least go to the edge of the sacred grove, though they do not enter. And /101/ there is an abundance of everything: dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, d'lo, or millet beer, and finally meats. At least a goat, and sometimes a bull, is killed for the whole village, and the heads of families offer goats and hens, depending their wealth.

782 778 776 In addition to the sacrifices offered once a year and those offered by a family when one of the children marries, the fetish receives homage and tribute from just about everyone. Sterile women and those who habitually miscarry offer it many hens and fawn upon the animal that is its mount. If one gives birth to a baby, one consecrates it to the fetish, calling it dji-ri-ba ("great tree"), gnéna ma ké (gnéna, "genie"; ma, "man"; ké, "male"), or gnéna ma (gnéna, "genie"; ma, "man"). They even like to add the name of the village where the bountiful dasiri is found: Kolotomo gnéna ma (1). /102/

1. Kolotomo, the name of a village about 30 kilometers from Ségou; gnena, "genie"; ma, "man."

(man or daughter of the dasiri genie of Kolotomo). Actually, the name gnénama is given only to girls; for boys the word ké ("male") is added: gnénama-ké.

796 778 824 It is known through the mediation of sorcerers that a dasiri sometimes leaves its sacred grove and its tree. This event is unusual; the tree may fall from old age, but the sacrifices will be continued

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778 on the stump, the open hole, or on the sprout that comes out of the
824 ground, grows, and replaces the tree.

776 Every dasiri has a sacred mount which bears its name and, as
778 I have already said, it seems to prefer a billy goat above all. The
825 latter dies of old age, that is, unless the good of the community dictates otherwise; I saw one perish in the prime of life because of

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A dasiri fetish tree (of Songobougou).

its scandalous behavior; he was inordinately fond of the ewes of the village, which he mistook for goats, and this behavior was far too shameless for a sacred being.

776 The fetish protects the village by causing the evil spells and
778 sorcery cast on it to misfire. It defends the village against wicked
621 people and against its enemies, and thanks to it the inhabitants can
793 peacefully devote themselves to their work in the fields. While averting plagues and diseases which decimate the population, it gives strength, health, and vigor to all, and finally it populates the village by making the women fertile. Above all, it is the source of unity among families for it brings them all together under the authority of a single head; the friends of the head of the family whose name, or diamou, it bears, are its friends, and his enemies are also its own. To fail the priest, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, is to fail the fetish, so close and intimate is the union between the two.

11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie

794 Since it is the fundamental basis of power and authority, the
776 worship of the dasiri can, with some justice, be regarded as the first
778 and oldest of all Bambara religious practices. That of the koté, or koré, likewise seems to me quite respectable from this standpoint and just as old. As a matter of fact, this spirit, like the dasiri, lives in
[824] a little grove near the village, and the three trees it likes to inhabit are the baobab, the false cedar, and the nettle tree.

794 The worship of the koré is especially popular in Bani country.
Today not all the villages have the fetish, but all have at /103/ least a few initiates belonging to this semioccult sect. The sect includes women among its members; it is divided into eight groups, each ruled by its oldest member, who in turn is under the authority of the koretigi, the supreme head of the association.

794 At the time of the annual sacrifices, and especially at the
778 sacrifices made every seven years on the days of admission (for it is necessary to be a koré dé (1) in order to participate in the secret part

1. Koré, the fetish bearing this name; dé, "son."

794 of the mysteries carried out in the sacred grove), these groups present
778 the most ludicrous gathering in the circle of Ségou. The kara maou carry a red and white perforated board, about two meters long called the kara; the souroukou wear a mask resemb ng a hyena (souroukou) and walk leaning on two sticks; and the korodouga get themselves up in a costume impossible to describe. The ta tougoula (2) dance,

2. Ta, "fire"; tougou, "to light."

holding a burning torch in each hand; the n'goni sama (3) cover them-

3. N'goni, "thorns"; sama, "to draw to oneself"; they are also called wara, "wild," "fearless," "courageous."

selves with thorns or lacerate themselves on the chest and under the armpits until they bleed; and the bisatjila (4) whip themselves with

4. Bisa, or bousa, "stick," "switch"; tji, "hit," "break."

long, flexible switches. There are also the djara (lions), who wear a mask just like that of the hyena (souroukou) only larger, and the soula (monkeys), who parade with hideous, grimacing masks and wear a tail in back made of braided grass.

794 The koré sect is semioccult, for while only initiates are allowed at the sacrifices and within the sacred grove, the dances are held in the village, and all, men, women, and children, attend. The wives of the korodouga belong to the confraternity by right, but they do not know the password djantéma ("man of the djanté"), and they are forbidden to enter the sacred grove. Their great privilege is that they are permitted to wear their husbands' uniform, which is a long necklace of red beans, to sit with the men around the gourds of beer, and finally to dance the dirty and disgusting dance of the korodouga without having to be ashamed.

this sacrifice at length, for in the preceding chapter I stated the function of the fetish; it may be imagined that the ladies and maidens ask for whatever makes a woman strong and beautiful. Moreover, the indecent dances to which they abandon themselves under the sacred tree sufficiently reveal their inner thoughts. They have only one -- to show their breasts to the fetish and scratch their navels on its bark; in some villages custom demands this, and it is required of all. Young girls do it to develop their breasts, married women to become fertile, and all of them to be protected from the unpleasant accidents peculiar to their sex.

There is no festival without a feast and none without drinking, and the women offer the whole village sorghum gruel and beer for a drinking bout. They also offer kola nuts to all the elders and heads of families, and they know better than to withhold this treat from fathers, husbands, grown sons, older brothers, and those they love.

The Sinsin, the Special Twin's Fetish

The sacrifice to a sinsin is made on the umbilical cord which is hung in the center of plates of woven grass that constitute the fetish. Each plate belongs to one of the twins and even bears his name. The sacrifices in honor of this fetish are always double; for each child separately, the family offers /millet/ flour /115/ mixed with water, millet beer, a kola nut, and a hen.

This is strictly a family fetish; the father of the family is its priest, and only the children and their parents are present at the sacrifices. Everything is done in a quiet and happy intimacy, and although there may be a few drunkards here and there, there is never an orgy. Sacrifices to a sinsin are made very frequently to bring its blessing to the mother and children; they are also performed on all occasions of the slightest importance in the lives of the twins: when their hair is cut eight days after birth, at the tattooing festival, at circumcision, at marriage, etc. Once a year a more formal sacrifice is made; the women cook d'lo, the millet beer, and the

845
778 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are
852 invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

776 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that
621 its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

776 The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted,
621 and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still
793 lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and
[482] fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

621 The palavers and deliberations are long, but the choice is a
793 happy one; the old man chosen as gnéna-n-sonnaba always has the
555 slyness and guile characteristic of the Bambara type. Patient and likeable, he will know how to be just and impartial in disputes, diplomatic and sufficiently master of himself to say only what he intends to. He will know how to acquire the reputation of an upright man who does not know theft or falsehood.

621 Elected for life to hold both civil and religious power, he is
793 truly the head of the village, the dougoutigi. His position is hereditary; it passes from brother to brother and, when there are none, goes by right to his oldest son. The one who is to succeed him becomes his aide (siéré), and the heads of families (gouatigi-ou) compose his council; they are always summoned when a question is to be handled or a decision made.

The Choice of the dasiri fetish and its sacred-mount

776 The new village has a head, his aide, and its council; it is
● 778 organized. Now they must find out the whereabouts of the spring,
787 rock, or tree where lives the protecting spirit, the dougou dasiri (1),

1. Dougou dasiri: /dougou/, "village"; da, "mouth," "entrance"; siri, "bind."

who fastens the entrance to the village and watches over it. For this knowledge the people appeal to a sorcerer; he has intimate contact with the spirits, knows their ways and customs, and understands their language.

There are many sorcerers, and they do not all work in the same way. One discovers his oracles in the entrails of a hen, a second traces cabalistic signs on ashes, a third endlessly moves little stones, bones, and cowrie shells, counting them again and again. To locate the dasiri, people have recourse to the flélikéla (2) diviner, who

2. Flélikéla, "to look attentively, curiously."

works with a gourd three quarters full of water.

When he has received his honorarium of 40 cowrie shells, which he takes in both hands, he places beside him in the dust his little /117/ gift, consisting of two kola nuts, a few hens, or better, a small billy goat. He asks about the place chosen for the new village and has it described to him down to the smallest detail. Then he takes down a dirty n'go (1) on which he places a gourd which he tips slowly right

1. A ring made of braided roots
bound with cotton thread, which
is covered with a thick layer of blood.

and left, forward and backward, to give it a firm position on its stand. Having done this, he sums up for the spirits the conversation which he has had, and then, with eyes afire and holding his breath, he gives the gourd three flicks with the middle finger of his right hand. They say that a soft murmur, a murmur which is none other than the voices of the genii, is noticed by all present. They hear without understanding, but the sorcerer knows these voices and when he rises it is with a tone of authority that he names the dasiri and the animal which will be its mount.

In the province of Ségou the dasiri is a tree; the tamarind, the false cedar, and the baobab are the preferred trees. The sacred mount, also called dasiri, is a snake, an iguana, a rat, a donkey, etc., but most frequently it is a billy goat.

Enthronement of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri and dougoutigi, head of the village

Our Blacks establish the new village and build their huts. Near the fetish tree each family sets up its mortars for grinding sorghum, places its hearths, and installs its kitchens. Bows, guns, and farming implements are hung on the branches of the dasiri, and while the work of settling continues, meals are eaten and dances held in its shade, and in the evening when the moon is shining it is near the tree that they finally stretch out to sleep.

793 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, assumes office from the
782 first day and offers a sacrifice in the name of his people. On the trunk
62 of the tree, about a meter from the ground, he pours d'lo, or millet
778 beer, and dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with water, and causes a flow of blood from hens, roosters, goats, and sometimes from a young bull. After this general sacrifice, individual ones follow, for, in order to /118/ place himself under the protection of the genie, each family head in order of seniority offers it a little dégé and a little blood, through the intermediary of his leader, the priest. And on the trunk of the tree there is nothing but great blood stains with feathers, hairs, and shreds of skin stuck in their midst with the remains of chewed kola nuts. Then come the dances, and men, women, and children go into a frenzy at the sound of drums; and the tumult is indescribable.

Sacrifices offered to the dasiri

778 A path a meter wide leads from the village to the fetish tree
782 which is always located in the middle of a small grove if possible.
796 Heads of families sacrifice to it several times a year -- on the morning after the konio, or first night of marriage, for example, but the festival in which the whole village takes part is annual. The ceremony has greater importance every second year, and every seventh year it degenerates into an orgy.

During the sacrifice the women stay at the edge of the sacred grove, and only the men and boys go inside and surround the fetish. After an offering of dégé and a little d'lo, the throat of a sheep or goat is cut in the name of the whole village, and the head of each family, comes with hens, sheep, goats, etc., according to the family's means and the number of members; the meat piles up. The hens are plucked on the spot, the large pieces are cut up, and the women carry it all back to the village. Each family head is given a piece as big as a fist from the first sacrifice offered in the name of all, and this, too, is
[252] taken back to the village; the rest is roasted and then grilled on the spot and eaten by the men, without salt, pepper, or any kind of seasoning. The dégé and d'lo of the main sacrifice are drunk under

778 the fetish tree, the former by the children who smear themselves
782 and whiten their entire faces, and the latter by the men and circum-
796 cised youths (1).

1. By the main sacrifice I mean the sacrifice made in the name of the whole village.

After the noon meal men, women, and children go to the public square to drink beer, or d'lo, and to dance. /119/ The signal for the celebration is given by the gnéna-n-sonnaba, who makes a little speech inviting his children (né ka démisenou, "my children," "my subjects") to have fun and to drink but to avoid fights and quarrels, and then launches into a quadrille. While he dances, the crowd stands bareheaded, cries "you you" loudly, and competes as to who will shake his spear or ax to beat the measure. This annual festival goes on for three or four days, as long as the d'lo, or millet beer, lasts.

776 All circumcised men and excised women may, through the
782 intermediary of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, offer a sacrifice to the genie protector of the village. Anyone who thinks he has offended or displeased it offers one -- with or without bloodshed according to his means -- to obtain pardon, propitiate it, and gain its favor. Individuals sacrifice primarily to make requests; a di ("give it") are the first words they were able to lisp as infants. A sterile woman
[842] will offer it a kola nut, dégé, a rooster or a hen at every moment, always promising not to be miserly and to give more if she becomes a mother. She will be especially assiduous toward the dasiri animal, the mount of the genie of this name; she will coax it, stuff it with bran, and will often go far into the bush to pick it a stalk of grass or a leafy branch which are its delicacies.

776 Genii spirits can leave the spring, the rock, or the tree where
778 they have established their dwellings, and the dasiri is no exception to this rule. If it does so, the fetish tree loses its sanctity, becomes a common object, and can be destroyed. Similarly, all things in the sacred grove, both plant and animal, cease to be taboo and can be used for their customary purposes. The dasiri is not at all fickle.

776 It rarely leaves its tree; it likes its little grove and shady park, and
778 in many places it is satisfied with a stump that is all blackened, worm eaten, rotten, and falling to pieces.

The formula of the sacrifice

782 When one is present at a sacrifice to the dasiri and sees the
781 gnéna-n-sonnaba uncover his head, take off his large blouse, and crouch at the feet of the fetish, one expects something imposing and grand. Nothing of the sort occurs, and one is quite surprised to find so little gravity /120/ in such an important act. People enjoy themselves and chat; the priest, red with blood, tosses off witticisms and coarse jokes, and while feet and wings of the victims -- goats, sheep, and hens -- twitch in the agonies of death, nothing passes from one group to another but bursts of laughter that finally disappear far off at the edge of the grove where the women are.

782 The words in the sacrificial formula vary a little from one village to another, all depending on the volubility of the sacrificer. Nevertheless, it remains basically the same everywhere. After having greeted the fetish in his own name and the name of his subjects, he implores it to forgive them all the insults, offenses, and disrespect toward it, of which they have been guilty, voluntarily or involuntarily, during the entire year. He then calls it by a name related to the type of tree in which it is located -- e.g., ma ziraba ("great baobab man"), ma djala ba ("great false-cedar man"), -- and announces that he is going to sacrifice. While offering the dégé and d'lo, he implores it to protect them against the evils of the sons of the fetish siri, the souba (1), to preserve them from the souya maou (2), the

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1. Sou, "night"; ba, "great." The souba are masters of the night who change themselves into hyenas or owls, dig up corpses, and eat human flesh.

2. Souyaké, "to prowl at night."

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1. Drums over a meter long and peculiar to the koré.

2. A kind of triangle which is hung on the thumb of the left hand and is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger.

•[778] the kârâ"), one of whom carries the kârâ, the perforated board which is the emblem of the fetish and at the same time the altar on which sacrifice is made to deceased members. First come the souroukou (hyenas) who guard the sacred grove and during the sacrifices drive away prying, uninitiated people; they wear crude masks, roll their big heads right and left, and utter frightful "hou hous." The [532] korodouga (clowns), who rake the paths in the sacred grove as well as its environs to protect it from brush fires, run from one to another shouting obscenities. Furiously they shake their gourds, which have handles and are perforated and filled with small stones, and furiously they blow into pipes made of pumpkin stems. The leader of this [292] band is dressed up in a cloak made of reed stems, he also wears a reed headdress which is topped by a pyramid of large red beans called n'go blé and decorated with a plume; in his hands he holds the emblem of the group, a long pole on which are hung dirty bags, sorghum stems 10 to 20 centimeters long bound into bundles, pumpkin stems, /123/ skulls of rats, beaks of ducks and hawks, panther claws, etc.

794 796 292 522 Apart from the long string of red beans which all korodougo are required to wear which they twine around their necks several times or sling over the shoulder, crossing and recrossing it on the back and chest, each one dresses according to his own inspiration. The hats are made of bunches of feathers, wings of vultures and ducks, and even entire birds, and around them to decorate them further are red beans, rat skulls, birds beaks, claws, and small bones; all these objects fall on the neck and shoulders and knock together with a sinister sound. Next to men in full breeches are men in rags or men with close-fitting trousers made of innumerable pieces all in different

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whole circle in the dry season. For example, the master of a Nama will give an account, and the storyteller will take up the refrain, which always ends: "I have told you truly, the Nama can refrain from evil, but it is capable only of evil (a ka fari, a ka djougou ko djougou). It is evil, very evil!"

776 theless refrain from an evil act and thus indirectly grant a blessing to human beings. The words of the formula in the sacrifices to the gnéna and the gnâ seem identical, and yet, when one has understood the inmost feelings of the Bambara soul, one sees all the difference between them. To one as to the other the Negroes say: "Ka dji d'amma (give us water), ka mousoou d'amma (give us wives), ka nafolo d'amma (give us wealth), etc." But while in speaking to the first they actually ask for water, wives, etc., they make an indirect request to the second, so that their words mean: "Do nothing to keep us from having wives," "do nothing to keep us from having water," etc. In expressing himself this way he uses all his cunning, and all his deceit comes to the surface and is revealed. Yes, he really deserves the epithet that neighboring tribes have given him and of which he is proud; it is misi bo, "cow dung," -- dry on the outside but limp and soft inside, so that it is squashed when it is stepped on. His inner feeling when he addresses the boli is this: "O Spirits, evil genii, you are capable only of evil; may your hatred not attack me or those who are dear to me, may it all be for my enemies and those that can harm me!" /130/

2. The Legend of the Boli

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This is a very curious legend, for it makes the boli come from Mecca, the holy city! To understand it better, let us remember in passing that Islam has only made the Bambara more attached to their idols. They have died in order to keep them; they answered the

"believe or die" of the Moslems by taking up their spears, and when they were conquered, reduced to servitude, and unable to continue their worship openly, they remained true to the faith they received from their ancestors. Severed heads became the prey of vultures, and spilled blood flowed, but those that survived only became hardened. The Moslem conquerors, tired of striking and in need of slaves and manpower, had to admit their defeat in the field of religion.

Some fell away from the idols (slaves, and some rich people seeking to safeguard their lives and possessions), but their apostasy was strictly external and a lie, for they shouted the formula but in secret devoted themselves to their bloody rites, imbuing their children with their own faith and not that of their masters. A lie has never been difficult for the Bambara; to know how to lie is for them more than half a virtue. Thus, when the right to freedom was proclaimed in 1907, I was not at all surprised to see that out of nearly 5,000 slaves who spontaneously set themselves free, the majority returned to their homes or to the land of their fathers, forgot the formula, and declared themselves to be fetishists. They did not get initiated then since they already had been (1).

1. Those who took back their own freedom in 1907 were all slaves of the Moslems. The "Peulls" /Fulani/, a shepherd people, saw almost all their slaves escape. The Bambara in slavery kept their traditions as well as they could; in the Negro village of Biskra I found sons of the Bambara who did not know their own language and were fanatical Moslems, yet kept their tattoos, sacrificed to the family boli handed down by their fathers, danced the dance of the korodouga, and used the Bambara formulas and songs although they no longer understood them.

198 Since all the Bambara could not be made to submit to shameful
171 servitude, the Moslems were satisfied to impose a tax, to forbid
178 public worship of the idols, and, with sheathed sword, sought to make converts by persuasion. Their caravans were quick to cover the country, preaching Islam in all places both favorable and unfavorable, but the mass of the people could not be approached. In order to give /131/ their beliefs a rational basis, they always did everything in the name of "Alla, " "Stamboul" (the Sultan of Constantinople), and "Makka (Mecca), and said to the conqueror: "All true belief comes from Mecca (Makka); it is the center of all religious life, so why do you fight so hard against our boli? They all come from Mecca. God has given you the formula: 'there is no Divinity other than God and Mohammed is His prophet'; for you He prescribes ablutions, Friday rest, etc.. Keep your formula and shout it! To us Bambara He has given the boli and bloody sacrifices, so why do you want to take from us our treasures that are hungry for blood?" I do not doubt that we owe
773 our "legend" to the discussions which arose between the m'rabet (the
776 marabout, or Moslem priest) and the gnâtigi, or bolitigi. Here it is
194 as I so often heard it told by bold old men:

A group of youths who were devoting themselves to trade and following lady luck (ou toumbe kolo (1) gnini, "they were seeking

[436] 1. Kolo, "cowrie shells" (singular, koké), small shells used as money.

cowrie shells"), one day took the road to the east. Over mountains and valleys the little band walked and walked for a long time, and then finally they reached the great, blue, salty water, the ocean, on the shores of which lies the holy city, Mecca (Makka) (2).

[823] 2. Since the Moslems said that Mecca was located on the seacoast, and since the Bambara did not know Arabia, they believed it to be in this direction. In their minds the ocean does not have to be crossed to get there. Actually, this is the least of their worries.

Their stay there lasted several years, and no one expected to see them again. It was said that bandits had fallen upon them and massacred them or reduced them to slavery, and funeral rites were to be given them. The sanga fo (3) in their honor began; the women

3. Condolences from acquaintances to the family of the deceased.

wept, filling the air with their cries, and after several days of dancing, everybody went back to pleasure and work.

The young Bambara were not dead, they came back and, better yet, were in no way stained by Mohammedanism. Even in the heart of Mecca they met a Bambara tribe, brothers who were thoroughly fetishist, and their secret rites, sacred dances, and sacrifices made more impression on their hearts and imaginations than the worn and cold formula, stupid prostrations, and tiresome /132/ ablutions of the sons of Islam. They were initiated into the rites of the gnâ, or boli; they bought some; and one fine day, rich in gold and silver, flocks of goats and sheep, women and slaves, they took the road back to the Niger. The caravan was large, the loads heavy, the road was barely passable, and discouragement touched the hearts of the bravest more than once. Finally, they reached the great river and the loads and boli filled boats by the hundreds.

The start of the voyage was happy; only a very few loads fell into the water and were lost going through rapids. Then a day came when everything changed; the wind started to blow violently; the water boiled, foamed, and swelled; and the boats, made of two hollowed tree trunks placed end to end and bound together with weak ropes, crashed together and broke. Who can tell how many disappeared in the floods that day with all their cargoes! The loss was great, especially in boli, but these have the power of gods, and they quickly changed into fish. According to the legend there have been torpedo fish, manatee, etc. in the depths of the river since that day.

Everything was not lost, however. When the travelers arrived in the Beledougou and the Ben-dougou (1), they still had a large stock

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1. Bélédougou: bélé, "ferruginous rock"; dougou, "village," "country"; a province back of Bamako kati. Ben-dougou: ben, "meet"; dougou, "country"; the eastern end of Bambara country, on the Bani.

of boli. People came running from all directions. Of course there were festivals and amusements, and everyone wanted news and wished to learn about this Mecca which was so vaunted by the Moslems. "It is indeed a large city," they said, "but do not think that all they know there is the worn formula la ilah ill l'allah, which is shouted by the sons of the Prophet all day long. At Mecca there are Bambara (2) who sacrifice to genii as we do. They have additional rites that

2. This word Bambara (Bamana) of the legend denotes less the people than the religion, and it seems to me that it should be understood in the sense of kafri, as already indicated in speaking of the origin of the word Bambara. (As I pointed out /in Chap. IV, 3/ I believe its original meaning to have been "rebel" and not "son of the alligator" or of the fish ban ma, a kind of tench.)

you do not know; /133/ they know how to protect themselves from evil genii and demons; they sacrifice to the boli. The latter /boli/ are terrible. They kill anyone who insults or displeases them and actually have consideration only for those who give themselves to them and become their children. Thanks to them, our brothers in Mecca are rich and powerful and live to be old. They quickly discover thefts, lies, and adultery. In fact, the boli render justice, and whoever asks it of them cannot lie with impunity. The deepest insult against them is to call on them to witness a lie; they always take vengeance for this offense, causing endless evils to its perpetrator

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778 and even going so far as tocause his death." These accounts excited
794 the Negroes' curiosity; they wished to see the boli, wanted to sacrifice to them. They gave themselves to the boli, and thus became their children.

Once the people were initiated, the travelers unveiled the mysteries to them, bound them by the law of secrecy. They imposed upon them the prohibition against admitting uninitiated men and women and children to their ranks, and the sects were formed. These have multiplied continuously; each boli has its own, and since the boli are male and female and produce children, they have become legion, and each village has sects and boli of its own. Although the
778 worship of the boli has not destroyed that of the gnéna, or djiné, it
794 has long exceeded the latter; their sacrifices and drinking bouts are accompanied by an external pomp that has a different grandeur, and no important action is taken without their agreement. It can be asserted without fear of error that the worship of the gnâ, or boli, is the chief religion of the Bambara at the present time. It is the basis of union within families and the foundation of the sina-n-koun, or sworn friendship; through the boli the people of the same village are closely united, and this union extends from one village to another and from one province to another, since all members of a boli's sect are brothers and owe each other mutual assistance under certain specified circumstances.

In the Bambara's mind (and I have spoken of this at length in
776 my chapter, "The Ideas of the Bambara are not of Islamic Origin"),
778 the boli are nothing less than intrinsically evil beings in revolt against
782 the Supreme Being, God the Creator and Lord of all things. As the formula of the sacrifice to Touafé Bla suggests, the place where they dwell is fire or hell, and there is not a Negro who will not tell you /134/ that the boli is a demon (sétané). Can it not be said that his religion is a worship rendered to "Satan himself?" He renders this worship in full knowledge of what he is doing. Have I not heard the sacrificer in a sacrifice to a Nama boli (1), shout before cutting the

1. A note by Father Coppe of the White Fathers (unpublished manuscript),

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which I have before me, reports the same fact on the subject of the Komo boli. Moreover, this Father is a student of the Bambara -- when the Blacks of Ségou speak of him, they say, "Bamana-n-do," which means that he spoke and understood their language well.

throat of the victim of the general sacrifice: "Alla djampa ba, i k'an bla, i ka bo an koun na, God, great traitor, leave us, go away from us!" -- and the crowd repeated the blasphemy after him: "Alla djampa ba, i k'anbla, i ka bo an koun na!"

3. Boli Whose Power is Slight

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778 Since the boli do not all have the same strength and power, and fear is the basis and foundation of Bambara worship, they are not all equally honored. We will divide them into two main groups, those of "little power" and those of "great power," and we will end this chapter with a word on the talking boli, the prerogative of certain sorcerers, and on the sirikoun, another, quite special, kind of boli.

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278 By boli of little power I mean all evil fetishes which are basically not very terrifying, in the sense that it is thought that they very seldom cause anyone's death. Many of them are primarily medicines, and almost everyone has them. They are tails of cows, goats, dogs, and wild animals; they have no specific names and are generally called foura (2) ("medicine"). Additional "medicines" are the kana,

2. This name foura is given in a general way to all boli; I should therefore remark that the word "medicine" in the sense that we understand it, is not the exact translation of the word foura. This word is in itself untranslatable

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into our language and means a force, a conscious force, that opposes another conscious force which seeks to harm us, and destroys it.

horns and hoofs of bulls filled with an ointment the composition of which it is very difficult to specify: blood, fat, and dried, crushed glow-worms are combined with iron powder, charcoal, and other /135/ ingredients. They are the Bambara equivalent of the "pink" pills which cure all ills, including baldness and ingrowing nails -- and that sums it up. The kana of which I speak are boli, and differ from the kana possessed by each powerful boli, which are no longer boli but parts of boli. Let us quickly admit that the word kana is as indefinite as the word foura, and means primarily "that which protects, preserves, and keeps us from harm."

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These little fetishes are not given festivals, and only their owners sprinkle them with blood and sacrifice to them. They cost little, and a sorcerer or the owner of a father foura or kana will make one for a modest sum varying between 5 kémés and a ba fla (5 kémés = 200 cowrie shells; ba fla = 1,600 cowrie shells), which is from 5 sous to 2 francs.

Apart from the sorcerers, whose boli are innumerable, there is a whole group of people, the noumons (blacksmiths), the koulés (who dig canoes and mend broken gourds), the donzo (hunters), etc., who have such strong confidence in all these horrors that they would rather die of hunger than be deprived of them. The hunters all have some to make them active and alert. Before every hunt of the least importance there is a black pullet from each, and on the return another sacrifice is made, however unlucky the hunt may have been. The keeper of each fetish is usually the only one to pay respects to it. However, his brother hunters may give it a small offering, and it is understandable that they do so, since each fetish has its specialty. One is for deer, another for guinea fowl, a third for the big antelope (dadjé in Bambara and best known to Europeans under the name of koba, a word of the Peul language) or for the wild pig /facochère/, for the panther or the

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224 778 782 lion, for the hyena or for the anteater, etc., and since each cannot possess them all, one or the other is appealed to according to the need of the moment.

The most interesting of this group of boli are the togo fen foula, which watch over the gun and arms of the hunter in a quite special way, protecting them from the ko nege ba, a greedy and rough hand which deprives a woman of her periods if she touches meat offered to it in sacrifice or game killed under its auspices, and from the tougouroûna, which has consideration only for those who own it and makes all others /136/ powerless /the French word here is impuissant, meaning both "powerless" and "impotent"/ if they touch the meat of its sacrifices or game killed under its auspices (1).

1. Game killed under the auspices of a boli belongs to it just like the victims of a sacrifice, and if these are "taboo" for a class of people, the game similarly becomes taboo.

224 778 Along with the fetish some hunters also own the gnâma daha (2),

2. Gnâma, "force," "power," "malignant fluid"; daha, earthen receptacle called a conari.

a conari in which roots and leaves gathered at night by moonlight, here and there at random are simmered and soaked. When certain kinds of game, such as an anteater, for example, have been killed, the animal is washed with these roots and this juice of doubtful color. I have been told that the juice of the gnâma daha induces the flow of urine, so that the gnâma (3) of the animal leaves, its wild animal

3. See what I said about the gnâma in Chap. I, p. 17 ff.

smell disappears, and then the meat can be eaten (4). /137/

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4. All Negroes do not resort to the gnâma daha. But then they are not limited to a single means of handling

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Costume of a Bambara hunter.

the problem; they have more than one string to their bow. Immediately after killing a fur-bearing animal, every hunter empties the urine by pressure or cutting.

224 778 These little hunters' fetishes have no festival or formal sacrifice. Some ultimately gain great renown in the ranks of our "Nimrods," however, and then they come in large numbers bringing black pullets. The master of the idol then chooses a day for a strictly private drinking bout at which only initiates of the hunter sect are present.

778 596 The most powerful of all the boli whose influence is slight are the boli of the hut or the family, the familial boli to which the heads of families, the gouatigi, sacrifice. These take practically all shapes: they are horns, balls coated with blood resembling all the tubers of creation, all kinds of tomatoes and eggplants, napkin rings, etc. -- in sum, horrors, each wrapped in a very dirty, filthy goatskin. They are to be found hung in the b'lon, or entry hut, together with the ex voto, a package of goat skulls carefully emptied and stripped of flesh. The family boli are legion, and it is impossible to know them all. The most widespread and the most highly valued are the ma bara, the sirini, the bala, the bara, the baga (1), and the bama-n-djigi.

1. A boli is always made of several pieces, each with a special name. All these pieces are called boli dé. Among the boli dé there is one which is called boli dén fa. One piece of the baga is a thong which forms a belt that the sacrificer puts around his thighs, all covered with blood, before proceeding with the individual sacrifices. The baga protects against bullets, arrows, and spears. Some baga are famous, and Negroes go to find the masters of these fetishes and receive from them a small facsimile of the baga belt.

778 596 782 At the annual sacrifice the gouatigi, or head of the family, offers a goat and at least a hen and a kola nut for each male child no matter how strained his circumstances or how slight his self-respect. He also offers d'lo, or millet beer, and all his family make merry. [574] Some even do things in a big way, and although the whole village does not take part in the drinking bout, all the old men are invited, and many close friends come from everywhere.

778 596 The family boli take the interests of the head of the family in their hands; they are responsible for driving away illness and reverses of fortune. /138/ Through them one gains many descendants, wealth, wives, a happy and lively old age, honor and respect. They are also appealed to on all occasions in life that are of the slightest importance. Before a long journey is undertaken or a business venture is entered into, when a disaster threatens or there is a possibility of a piece of unhoped-for good fortune, they are reddened with a trickle of blood. Sacrifice is also made to them at harvest time (many are even called by the generic name of gno four, "millet medicine"), but especially at circumcisions and excisions, at betrothals, marriages, and funerals. The tne, or "taboo," of these fetishes (see above, p. 5ff.), is taboo for each wife's eldest son, and sometimes the whole family makes it its own.

4. Boli whose Power is Great

778 782 796 I call powerful boli all those gnâ of every shape and size whose worship is secret and in whose mysteries only those participate who have been initiated into the rites, after having sworn on their lives never to reveal them. Countless victims are offered to these boli; some of them are always warm and are ceaselessly reddened with blood. At the annual festivals not only is there a hecatomb of roosters and hens, but dogs and goats by the dozen also die, and in Bani country I have seen as many as five or six sacrificers working at the same time. This is the great and true Bambara worship, and it gives rise to orgies of four to eight days; it eclipses the ancient worship, that

178 of the gnéna, or djiné, and like it or not, the worship of the dead is
182 trivial in comparison, a little devotion, one might say.
196 These boli are greatly feared and dreaded. They render justice and decide all controversies; they have the right of life and death over human beings; and it is through their intermediary that the Bambara avenge themselves and take reprisal on a real or imaginary enemy.

178 No victims are too fine for the powerful boli. There was a time
182 when men were sacrificed to them -- I think that this cannot possibly be doubted. At the time of the Negro king N'golo, says the legend, a man of Faléma -- a small village on the road from Ségou to Koutiala which is now in ruins -- went to the king with his fetish /139/ Sa folo. The king had himself initiated, wanted to own it, and his first victim was the owner himself, the man from Faléma. If old men talk to you about the capture of Sikasso by the French, they will all tell you that, on the morning of the attack, men were sacrificed to the chief boli of the city. Were there not, in 1907, in a temple not far from Koutiala, a row of human skulls hung on the walls as ex voto? A little before the conquest, under the reign of the Moslem princes El-Hadj-Omar and Amadou, the master of the Nama fetish of Misango was asked to go to Ségou with his idol. He said he did not own one, but a woman betrayed him, and a search was made in Misango and its environs. The man was informed in time, and he changed the hiding place of his Nama, and the woman, convicted of lying, was given him as a slave in compensation. A little later, a sacrifice of thanksgiving was offered to the fetish, and the traitorous woman was among the victims. She was old, and the god considered her too tough; he ordered that she be sold and some children be bought, since they were victims worthy of it. Its orders were carried out, "for," say the storytellers who sing it praises, "when sacrifice is made to the Nama one must never forget nzégéné dégé (1), honey, two red

1. Millet flour and nzégéné (Balanites oethiopica).

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782 roosters, two red kola nuts, and one dégenéni, an infant of two to three months."

Since the French occupation and the suppression of slavery, human beings are no longer sacrificed regularly. All the legends give one to understand, moreover, that they were always unusual and very infrequent. Yet who will ever be able to say what took place, and what still takes place nowadays at night in those sacred groves which only initiates can enter? One can always imagine that, lacking sacrifices, the initiates of the siri, the fetish of the souba or soubaga, disinter corpses in order to have human blood to offer to their idol and human flesh to taste. It is a unanimous belief among all the Negroes that they do so, and no sacrifice is made to the gnéna, to the gnâ, or to the shades of ancestors without a repetition of the words: "Protect us from the souba," -- in other words: "Protect us against the initiates of siri." These souba, of which I have already spoken /140/ in my chapter on metamorphosis (see above, p. 29), do not seem to differ in any way from the occult religious sects of the Basêzi of Uganda and the Baswêzi of the Ouchirombo, the cannibals of the equator.

778 And of what are they made, all these boli that for the most part have their temples and their sacred groves? A little of everything, I think, goes into the making of these horrors. Many times have I untangled these blood-coated gods and found only the bark of trees, roots, horns of goats, deer, and bulls, and finally claws of almost
778 all quadrupeds. It is said that the Komo of Tigini, 30 or 35 kilometers
773 from Ségou, is the body of a child. The legend says it was made by one Kari, the great-great-grandfather of the man who owns it at present, and this miserable man pushed barbarism to the point of taking his first grandson, a few months old, and grinding him alive in a mortar. An almost identical legend is current about the Komo of Kégné in Bani country which is at present in the hands of quite a young man called Marka N'zan. It is even said that if the first child of the owner of this latter fetish is a boy it belongs to the Komo. Is this child sacrificed or do they simply poison him? I have nothing definite on this matter.

778 All these are obviously legends and I give them as such, not having been able to assure myself of the facts de visu; I maintain, however, that they may be true. I broke open not a Komo, but a Kono, which was the torso of a child three to four years old.

Some boli, like the Tji wara and the Nama, are made of wood; others, like the Douga, consist of a considerable number of bulls' horns. They also take on almost all shapes, and when one opens the dirty goatskins that serve as their tabernacles, one finds horns and napkin rings, and among them balls suggesting all the fruits and tubers of creation, and one has to be more than an initiate to recognize the main item in this conglomeration. There are also some that resemble a crude doll whose arms are two horns; others are in the form of a hippopotamus, a cow, or an elephant, and in the Magna of Zambala on the Bani, in the circle of Sikasso, I even saw a little horse.

The boli are always composed of several pieces called boli dé, among which is the boli den fa, a little larger /141/ and rounder than the others because it receives the first trickle of blood and the mouthful of chewed kola nut. Some boli are strictly male or female, and others, like the Nama and Tji wara, for example, are mated and live in their temples with the females. The latter always resemble their husbands; they are less strong, but that is all. These fetishes, especially those that are famous, feared, and dreaded, often stay hidden, and their covering is not taken off until the moment of sacrifice.

778 791 158 The worship of the powerful boli is more complicated than that of the gnéna, or djiné, and an entire staff is needed to serve them. First, there is the owner of the fetish, the gnâtigi, or bolitigi, and the sacrificer, the mouroukalatigi. These are helped in their duties by two wara da (also called waraminadé), who are intermediaries between the fetish and its owner (1). It is through them that the genie

778 791 1. The Komo being the most famous in the province of Ségou, it is the staff of this fetish I am giving here. The others have staffs that are similar, but

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of course the names change a little. On the staff of the Nama there are not only warada but also djenfa tje and djenfa mouso, who go through the village to exorcise /all evil from/ it, holding the fetish in their hands or putting it over their faces. They are preceded by a torch bearer, who is usually the darotigi, or beadle. Some fetishes, the Kono for example, have a person especially responsible for carrying it to the place of sacrifice. He performs the duties of the darotigi; the one who carries the Kono is quite often called Kono guenguéba.

778 makes known its wishes and gives its orders; and when it does so, its
791 spokesman is always seized by an epileptic attack followed by
158 catalepsy. When he has spoken he is brought out of this state by being sprinkled with consecrated water, and he goes back to his place as if nothing unusual had happened. He seems to feel no fatigue, his features are composed; and yet only a moment earlier his body ran with sweat, his limbs shook with nervous trembling, his eyes were wild and starting out of their sockets, saliva that was often tinged with blood ran from his mouth, and his breath was whistling and irregular.

778 The gnâ also has its beadle, the darotigi, who rings for the
791 sacrifice, thus warning the initiates to come quickly and the uninitiated to stay in their huts. Since he also sings the praises of the fetish while ringing his bell, he is also called /142/ gnâ djéli, storyteller /griot/of the gnâ. To all these are added the band of members and initiates, whose function consists chiefly in providing the food and beer for the orgies. These are the gnako dé-n-ou, children of the gnâ.

778 One becomes master of a gnéna, or djiné (1), by election or
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1. The sinsin, the gnéna of twins, is an exception, as it may also be bought.

inheritance, and rarely by purchase. The gnâ pass from father to son by inheritance, but it is always possible to obtain one by purchase; all that is necessary is to find in the village the number of people needed to make up the staff of the idol, provided one is not opposed by the sorcerer's veto.

Every purchase of a powerful boli occasions celebrations, festivals, and drinking bouts that last from three to eight days. These festivals are like marriage celebrations. Surrounded by his staff, the new fetish owner spends the day offering d'lo, or millet beer, to the many friends who come to congratulate him and give him their gifts. It is not until evening that he leaves his b'lon, or entry hut, and, followed by initiates carrying the idol, goes to the sacred grove or under the trees chosen to be the meeting place henceforth. The night is spent in dancing and shouting hymns.

In the eyes of the Negro to buy a gnâ is to become united with it in a firm and indissoluble way. It is equivalent to marrying the fetish, and they have no other phrase to express their idea, their notion of the matter: "A yé boli fourou, he got married"; "ayé boli fourou gosi, he has stamped and sealed his marriage with the boli" (2); "ne ka fourouboloma faro (3) flé, here is my wedding present";

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2. Fourou gosi: In order to enjoy the marriage lawfully, whoever marries must, in the presence of the head of the village, pay his wife's parents a handful of kola nuts -- usually eleven, one more than the required ten.

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3. Fourouboloma fara: This is the name of the small present of cowrie shells given to a

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/newly married/ couple by their friends. It varies from 40 cowrie shells to 2 kémés, or 160 cowrie shells.

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425 "a taboli konio kera, the marriage of his boli has taken place."

435 The value of a gnâ varies between 30 and 40 francs, and whoever owns one can from then on make them. If one counts the presents given to the maker and to his staff, the dogs, goats, and kola nuts offered in sacrifice on the day of his reception, and finally the beer of the wedding, its value is undoubtedly more than 100 francs.

5. Differences among the Powerful Boli

778 I class all the powerful boli into three main groups. In the first I place those which formerly were the prerogative of kings, princes, and ministers; in the second, those which have neither temple nor sacred grove; and in the third, those which have a temple and a sacred grove, or at least one or the other.

Those of the first group are not at all numerous, and the most popular are the Safolo, the Kongoba, the Nan-Woloko, and the Kouantara. They are usually found in villages which were formerly capitals of cantons or provinces and are in the hands of people whose families have included a kafotigi (head of a canton) or a fama (king or petty king), i.e., a head of a province, a minister of the king on whom the title of ruler (fama) was bestowed.

Everything leads me to think that in the beginning these were merely fetishes responsible for watching over the king and the people of his court, analogous to what above I have called the family boli. At present they have become boli of sects. But although all circumcised men can enter the ranks of those who pay them respect, only married men become initiated, and the orgies in their honor are private orgies whose entire cost is borne by graybeards.

778 According to legend, slaves were sacrificed to these boli in the
782 time of the Bambara kings. Since then the worshippers have been content to offer them millet beer, hens, and goats in addition to the

778 kola nuts required in every sacrifice. All the people of the village
782 rejoice at the annual sacrifice. From the goat hut, where hangs the goatskin that serves as its tabernacle (1), the fetish is carried in pro-

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1. The Bambara, whose huts are usually very clean, put their gods away in dark, filthy corners. The temples are small and have such low doors that it is often necessary to lie prone in order to enter.

cession to the place of sacrifice, a large tree that casts a little shade inside the village. During the procession the initiates shout sacred hymns at the tops of their voices, drums and xylophones beat and rumble, and all the circumcised stop when it passes /144/ and reverently bare their heads. The women and the uncircumcised kneel and bow their heads respectfully at the passing of the idol, which is hidden from profane view by a dirty cloth covering.

778 The boli of the second group are legion, and it is very difficult to know all of them. The main two are the Tji wara and the Douga.

A Tji wara seldom gives evidence of its power. Although it may kill its owner or anyone who happens to separate the male from the female in the course of the sacred dance, a Negro is seldom heard to blame it for the death of one of his family. This fetish is made of two forked sticks, one male and the other female, on which sacrifices are made. It may be seen hanging in the entry hut of its master, along with its cloak of false-cedar bark and its mask which are used in the sacred dance.

778 The mask of the Tji wara is tastefully made; in fact, it is the
532 best Bambara sculpture I have seen. It is carved of the wood of the dondol (Bombax cornui) and seems intended to represent a goat or a deer. The male often has curved horns and sometimes measures almost a meter in height. The female is smaller, its horns are straight, rings hang from its nose and ears and, no doubt because a goddess could not be sterile, it carries its child on its back. (1) During the

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1. It is easy to obtain a mask of the tji wara. Many colonials bring them back from the Sudan, but they are mistaken in speaking of it as a "Sudanese fetish." This mask and all the other masks, including the twins' doll, are not "fetishes" at all. They externalize for the Negroes their idea of the genie -- sétané -- which animates the object to which they sacrifice. /Placement of this footnote is editor's emendation, the original gives it on following page 153/.

During the sacred dance the Negroes, decked out in mask and cloak, are bent double and constantly in motion. From time to time they bellow [516] into a bull's horn. Since they cannot stand straight without failing in respect for the idol, they stretch out on the ground or crouch on all fours when they are tired and weary.

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At the time of the arrival of the bani-n-kono (storks), a little before the rainy season, a sacrifice of dogs, goats, and hens is offered to the Tji wara. This fetish is especially venerated by youths; they ask it for strength, health, and earnestness in work. Thus, when young people get together to cut shrubs and make a new field in the midst of the bush or to pull out weeds in the winter, a goat is sacrificed; and they work to the sound of the drum and the tji wara bellowing into his horn. Upon their return from the field, the workers are given millet beer; then the sacred dance begins in the public square /145/ and continues far into the night, to the great delight of the women and children.

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The douga consists of a fairly large number of bulls' horns enclosed in a goatskin. It is hung in the entry hut, and it is there its altar is set; this altar is a square column of earth attached to one of the corners of the room. It often measures a meter in height; the

•718 corner that is visible is decorated with horns, and a conari, a receptacle of baked earth, is fastened to the platform to catch the overflow of victims' blood. This receptacle is always surrounded by a little hedge made of porcupine quills, which gives the whole arrangement a somewhat fancy appearance.

718 More terrible than the tji wara, it is popular with some people; the Negroes readily appeal to it when they want to take revenge on
182 an enemy. Nor is it unusual to hear a Bambara blame if for the death of one of his family, and since several victims are offered whenever such situations and occasions arise, it receives a good sprinkling of blood from here and there. A great sacrifice is made to it annually, and on the assigned day dogs, goats, and hens are offered to it. Following the sacrifice, the initiates meet at the home of one or anoth of the most influential members of the sect, and the day is spent emptying jugs of millet beer and getting drunk.

The specialty of the douga is to protect people from snake bites. Nevertheless the Bambara sacrifice to it to some extent for everything. From it, as from the others, they ask for wealth, wives, rain in the winter, etc., etc. (2).

> 2. In every sacrifice there is the sacramental consumption of part of the meat and objects offered to the idol. These present partake of this communion at the actual site of the sacrifice and without any seasoning whatever.

718 Many other /boli in this category/ could be mentioned; for example, there is the da, to which the Bambara sacrifice in order to have a good harvest. But, although these are terrible, they are still not the boli which they really fear and dread and to which /146/ they sacrifice continuously throught their lives. The latter form a separate group; they have temples and sacred groves, nothing is done without them, and they are always being taken out of their stinking dens and filthy temples. Men, women -- everybody worships and consults

778 them, they have unlimited power. They render justice, oaths are taken on them, they exorcise all evils to some degree, they give fertility to the sterile, they have the right of life and death over human beings, and it is to them that appeal is made for vengeance on an enemy.

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Nia ngoni: the harp of the Nia fetish

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534 Chief among these fetishes are the Komo, the Nama, the Kono, the Nia, the Wara (or Djara), the Djo and the Magna, also called Tjaro fign. All of them have their special drums and musical instruments, and some, like the Nia and the Magna, even have an entire band. The band of the Nia consists primarily of guitars, skin bags, and small baskets in the shape of hourglasses filled with stones or bits of scrap iron. That of the Magna consists of one or /147/ two long

778 534 drums and a fairly large number of antelope horns (1). These are tuned

1. The old men say that before the Moslem invasion of Omar el Hadj, the musicians blew into elephant tusks. The tusks were confiscated because of the ivory and were replaced by horns of the great antelope, which the Europeans call by the Peul name, koba.

by means of a wooden bell, and each gives a special note and tone. 778 533 In fact, Bambara music is the sweetest and the least shrill that I have heard. Moreover the Negroes enjoy [534] it; one day at Bagini on the Bani, when three such bands gave a concert together, the women were so happy, so pleased and moved by the charm of its sweetness, that they took off their bracelets, earrings, and nose rings and laid them at the feet of the musicians.

Horned iron tube, trumpet of the Komo fetish (seen at Bagini in Bani country at the home of Boya, head owner of the fetish; it is between 0.30 and 0.35 meters long.

The Komo, the Kono, and the Nama have the wildest music there is -- trumpet blasts and frightful bellowings that freeze one with terror. In the Komo music, an iron tube which is part of the fetish 778 534 is blown into, and the initiates, warada darotigi, accompany the sacred songs on bamboo pipes. The pipes of the Kono are bulls' horns (2), and the sounds that come out of them are real roars. Those of

2. To make these pipes the Negroes cut the tip of the horn and close the opening with a spider's web.

178 534 the Nama are made of bamboo and smaller than those of the Komo. The big instrument here is the drum which is beaten with a bent iron rod. The syncopation is given on the bass drum which is wooden; the vibrations of the skins stop, and one would say that the sound is the knock of a bone that is broken clean; it gives one the shivers.

178 The Komo is always most carefully hidden, and one has to belong to the village to know in which hut it dwells. The main parts of the fetish are enclosed in baskets just like those used for transporting cotton, but three iron rods (3) on which /148/ sacrifices are made

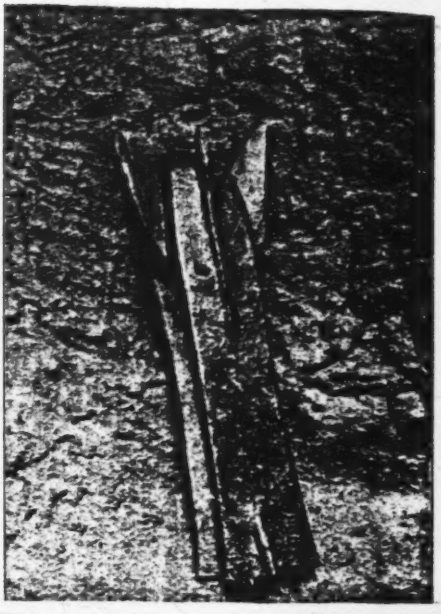
> 3. In the presence of the uninitiated these sticks are called Komo djoloko, and (again so that none of the mysteries will be revealed) the warada, those who speak in the name of the idol, are called djoloko samana, "those who carry the chains of Komo."

are usually kept in the skin of a striped cat. The Nama lives under a tamarind tree outside the village and has a beehive for a tabernacle. [417] The whole thing is surrounded by a djasé, a kind of palisade made of coarse mats which hides from the uninitiated both the hive and the receptacle into which the remainder of the victims' blood is poured.

178 346 The Nia and the Wara, or Djara, have round huts surmounted by conical thatch roofs. While the first is inside the village, the second is always outside at one of the entrances. The Kono has a square house with a flat terrace roof. It is always decorated with small bells fastened by lines on which are hung skulls of dogs and goats that have been sacrificed. Usually, if not always, it faces the inside of the village. The Magna does not have a temple strictly speaking, but it has its altar, a round turret surmounted by a receptacle [824] to receive the blood of victims. It is outside the village and always under a silk-cotton tree (Eriodendron anfractuosum -- kapok tree).

178 The Komo is equipped with a jointed mask and a cloak made of feathers of guinea fowl, hens, etc., which are used for the sacred dance. By means of a stick which the feather cloak hides from sight,

118 the dancer raises or lowers his mask, and at night, in the dim light of the fires, one might think it a dwarf demon which alternately grows little by little and then becomes smaller again. /149/ The Kono also has a mask. It is not jointed, and its cloak is not variegated like that of the Komo, for all its feathers are those of the djougo (1), which



Mask of the Kono fetish

1. A large black bird the French name of which I do not know.

are black.

All these fetishes are made up of a fairly large number of objects. Among the chief pieces there is usually a horn called kana, and a sirikoun which is used to will death to one's enemy and at the same time shield oneself from it. The principal part of the Kono, called boli den fa, is a kind of ragged doll with two horns for arms.

•778 [534] In the Komo an important part is played by three iron tubes, one of which is used as a trumpet (2). The most interesting and original

2. Tama guengueba is its name.

unquestionably is the Nama, which consists of two wooden heads called koungolo Nama ("heads of the Nama"); one, the male, is called tjéma and the other, the female, is called mousoma.

The Nama Fetish

These two heads seem to represent two fantastic birds, and the illusion created is complete when, preceded by the darotigi who shakes his bell and carries a lantern, the djenfa mousoou (3) run

3. The term applied to those who are permitted to take the heads in their hands.

through the village and around its walls looking for siri. It becomes even stronger when they place the heads on their foreheads and mingle

778 with the dancers /150/ who, with torsos naked to the waist, gesticulate and shout their sacred songs to the sound of drums and pipes:

778
539 A djigina so, gnâ, ma fambali, a djigina so, tjon k'a e.
He is our guest, the gnâ, great killer of men, he is our guest tjon k'a é.

A fiéréla ka dén, boli fiéréla ka dén.
He has blossomed to bear, to bear his fruits; this boli has blossomed, he has his fruit.

Soubaou, yo, nin kéra malo ko ye.
Souba, yo, this is done because of shame.

Soubaya kéra, dabali bé an ko yé.
Someone has devoted himself to the practices of the souba, we have a means of saving ourselves.

778 Nor does sacrifice to the Nama fail to be impressive. Only
782 members of the staff enter the enclosure where the beehive used as its tabernacle is located. The crowd of members remains outside, and no one approaches the palisade before it is his turn to give a sacrificial hen and kola nuts to the sacrificer. While the idol is being reddened with blood (1), /151/ two men, naked to the waist and facing the

778
171 1. The Nama of the Malinké is absolutely identical with that of their Bambara brothers. At Bendougouba, a village of the Kosilanbougou culture near Kita, there is a Nama, and one can identify the words as they are very nearly the same.

Bambara	Malinké
Male Nama: Tjema	Male Nama: Kema
Female Nama: Mousoma	Female Nama: Mousoma
The Nama protects chiefly against initiates of the siri, who are said to eat human flesh and are called souba.	The Nama protects against the soubaga, identical with the souba. It comes from Misèngo in Bélédougou.

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The Nama comes from Misango, a province of Bélédougou.

The Nama is sometimes called Souyakoro, Namakoro, and its diamou, or lineal name, is Sirima-n-fign.

The palisade around the Nama is called djasé; the receptacle for the blood, da.

The horned pieces of wood are called wara se and gnê bla, djenfa mousoou, djenfa tjeou, sometimes called waraou.

The master of the Nama at Misango, which is father of all /Nama/ is at present Tjema-n-djan; out of respect all masters of the Nama of Misango are called Foura tigiba.

There are three names for one and the same thing, say the Negroes of Kita: Souyakoro, Namakoro, and Sirimafing.

The palisade is called djasa; the receptacle, daga.

The horned pieces of wood are called gnâ bla and ko bla Wara, or Waradjeli or gnâ Wara.

Out of respect all masters of the Nama of Misango are called Foura tigiba (foura, "medicine"; tigiba, "great master").

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crowd, stand immobile on each side of the sacrificer and hold in their hands two pieces of wood about a meter long on which are tied three rams' horns (wara se) and two horns /sic/ (gné bla). It is an honor, even a distinction, to hold these horned pieces of wood, and these men are called djenfa tjéou.

Two annual sacrifices are offered to the boli of this group: one before the rainy season when, the Negroes say, the male and female idols mate, and the other about three months later, a little before harvesting begins when the grain is almost ripe. This is the time when the female idols give birth to their offspring, the best time to buy fetishes and to have fourou and konio made, because, as I said

before, whoever wants to own a boli must unite with it in as close a bond as if he were contracting a fourou marriage. In order to seal this union he must offer kola nuts, fourou gosi (1), to the village head and

1. The tribute which every man must pay if he wishes to enjoy his marriage legitimately.

the elders, in short, have a wedding (konio).

Women, uncircumcised men, and the uninitiated are never present at the sacrifices and festivals in honor of the fetishes of which I speak. However, I have seen women summoned to clap their hands and sing the praises of the Komo or the Kono. On the nights of the festivals they stay inside the village, and paths leading to the square where they are gathered are closed with kara, or coarse mats. Near them they hear the roar of trumpets and horns, and from time to time, above the mats, the silhouette of a hideous mask appears in sight and freezes them with fear and terrifies them, but in the dark of the night they cannot see details and are not able to say what they have seen. When the Nama is brought out (2), the women are summoned at day-

2. The phrase "to bring out the Nama" is my translation for the Bambara expression, Nama bora, which means that a sacrifice to the idol has been made, and that the night is spent in shouting and dancing the sacred dances. The Negroes also have the expression, a djigina so, "he came to visit us at home," (a djigina, ("he visited us at"...; so, "our home"). These expressions are used in relation to all boli.

break at the moment when the god is put back into his beehive, and

778 /152/ at the foot of the tree under which the initiates shouted and
782 danced all night, they are shown the siri found by the djenfa tjéou (1)
562

1. Djenfa tjeou; those who run with heads of the Nama.

and the darotigi, or darotala (2). While these siri (3) are burned, the

2. Darotigi, or darotala: he who rings the bell and precedes the djenfa tjéou with a lantern.

[754]

3. The siri are sacred objects which initiates of siri, the souba, throw here and there in the environs of the village in order to cast evil spells and sorcery on persons to whom they wish harm. Every time the Nama is brought out 20 to 40 siri are found. These small amulets /sic/, made of a little of everything, including trouser buttons, hooks, and belt buckles, tremble and moan while the women watch them. I have been present several times at this performance but have never perceived these tremblings and moanings, doubtless because I am not a Negro.

women dance and sing the praises of the idol.

778 The boli have two days of rest a week, Monday and Thursday
782 (4). It is nevertheless permissible to sacrifice to them on these days,

[304]

4. They rest in the sense that a festival at which they preside, e.g., a circumcision, never takes place on those days.

718 782 and on Sunday evening (tné sou, "the night of Monday"), the initiates of the Komo like to go out or, if you like, dance their dances and shout their sacred hymns. Since the boli preside at all important events of life, circumcisions, marriages, deaths, etc., I will speak of the admission to the sects of these fetishes and the sacrifices offered to them when I discuss these matters. I will say, however, before closing this paragraph, that at no time or season does a village let a week go by without offering a sacrifice to the great boli which they own or dancing their dances. The staff of these fetishes is feared, dreaded, respected, and honored, and on days of celebration their owners are in the place of honor and sit next to the gnéna-n-sonnaba (religious head of a village), or at least next to the sotigi (civil head).

718 782 695 In addition to the formal sacrifices at which the initiates are present, the great boli receive homage, tribute, and great streams of blood from individuals: appeals for their intervention are made constantly. Over a mere nothing an oath on such a fetish -- called kali boli la (5) is required, and if a dispute arises between two families,

5. There is a slight difference between kali boli la and boli sien. To take the oath called kali boli la is to swear on the fetish that one is telling the truth, that one is innocent. Only the accuser sacrifices. Seven straws must be fastened onto the object called sirikoun, and the accused, blara boli koro, is placed under the boli -- his life is placed in its hands -- and is to die if he has lied. In performing the boli sien, the accuser and the accused both sacrifice. Here again seven straws are fastened onto the sirikoun, and the accused is placed in the fetish's power twice:

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first by the accuser and a second time of his own accord (a blara boli koro, "the accuser places him under the boli"; a y'i bla boli koro, "the accused has placed himself under the fetish").

a boli sien (5) is needed, for the fetish must again be called on to be

/See footnote 5 immediately preceding./

a witness. /153/ These oaths entail heavy expenses, for one hen is seldom enough and a goat is very often necessary. I have seen four or five dogs, equal to an expenditure of 20 to 30 francs, sacrificed over a trivial matter.

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The three chief sacrifices offered by individuals are the fani-nké (1), the gnénama fani (2), and the sou fani (3). The first is made

1. Fani, "small throat cutting"; ké, "to make."

2. Gnénama, "one who has life," "alive."

3. Sou, "corpse."

to obtain a favor, to place oneself in the good graces of the fetish; the second, to preserve one's life, to escape a death already decreed; and the third is offered to appease a fetish whom one blames for the death of a relative (4) and to entreat it to spare the survivors of the

[74]

4. Eighty times out of 100, without exaggeration, death is blamed on a boli fetish.

778 family.
782 At the end of every important sacrifice, all the objects which make up the fetish are washed in the blood that has collected in the earthen receptacles called da, and it is not until after this operation, performed in the deepest silence, that the objects are replaced in their goatskins.

778 Negroes like to give the name of the fetish to children born at
55/ times of great sacrifices. I would even say that in studying the "names of people" one learns to know the gnâ, or boli, the gnéna, or djiné, and becomes initiated into the usages and customs of the country.

Names of children dedicated to the Komo, the most popular in the district of Ségou: Boli, boli ba, Néné, Nono, Négé son (or Négi son) (5), Togo-ba-tjé (6). /154/

5. Négi son: sacrifice to iron. Sometimes the word Komo is left unspoken out of respect, and the child is designated by one of the pieces of the fetish. The objects mentioned in the case of the Komo are three iron tubes (négi), sometimes called Komo djoloko ("chains of the Komo") in the presence of the uninitiated. The tube used as a trumpet is called tama guengueba.

6. Togo, "name"; ba, "big"; tjé, "man," etc.

Names of children dedicated to the Nama, the most important fetish after the Komo: Djasé, Sirima, Namakoro, Nama (1).

1. Djasé, the palisade which surrounds the sanctuary of the Nama. Sirimafign is the diamou, or family or lineal name, of the Nama.

778
551 Children dedicated to the Nia: Nia-gné foula, Nia-n-ti, Nia-n-nkoro, Nia.
Children dedicated to the Kono: Nièlé, Tjétjélé, Djonké (2).

[576]

2. Djonke, a respectful appellation often applied to the master of the Kono. Tjétjélé, the password of the initiates of the Kono and its family name, or diamou. When a stranger appears at the sacrifice, he is asked the question: "E b'a la wa Wélema djonké? Are you of the sect of Wélema djonké?" Only a brother can answer: "Tjétjélé, ne b'a la. Tjétjélé, I am."

Children dedicated to the Magna: Ma-n-djé, Magna, Magné.
Children dedicated to the Djo: Djo, Djokoro, Djoméné.
Children dedicated to the Douga: Dougakoro, Douga-n-tjé.
Children dedicated to the Da: Dakoro, Da-n-son, Da-n-wélé.
Children dedicated to the Bala: Bala, Balake, Mousa and Misa (3).

3. Mousa and Misa are synonyms of Bala and not a translation of the name Moses.

778
572 It is also on a powerful boli, or rather in its presence, that the Bambara swear to an indissoluble friendship, a friendship so close that it finds the two persons and their children like a kinship tie. This is the sinnakoun! No Negro has ever been able to talk to me about it with any clarity or precision, so that I am unable to give it a very exact definition. Basing my interpretation on the custom -- widespread among the Bambara -- of a woman showing her breast in order to indicate clearly that she is the mother of a child (a wolo ba, "his

778 572 mother who bore him"), and on the phrase sinna dé meaning "a child at the breast," I believe I can give this meaning to the word sinnakoun ("head," "tip of the breast": or again, "because of the breast"): "Between us it is as if we had sucked the same breast; therefore, we are like brothers." And /155/the persons bound by this type of friendship regard themselves as such, exchanging witticisms and light jokes without ever quarreling. Yet the Negroes are very sensitive and hardly ever allow joking. Seing such friends one would take them for kanémé, and the latter are relatives since they are maternal cousins (1).

1. A woman's children and the children of her brothers are kanémé to each other. Sinnakoun and kanémé are not impediments to marriage.

The sinnakoun between families dates from time immemorial; it appears to have no history, or at least I was unable to persuade anyone to tell me what it is. In any case, one can believe that it is a friendship sworn on a boli, or in its presence if you like, since nowadays two heads of families who wish to be united, to be sinnakoun, together redden a powerful fetish.

6. Talking Boli

778 [761] These are supposed to bring death to anyone who scorns them. Nevertheless, they are seldom blamed for death, and they bring chiefly evil spells, sorcery, and sickness. They are in the hands of so-called sorcerers, real leeches who go through villages in the dry season, always holding out their hands and begging.

778 791 A talking boli is usually the tail of an animal and the sacrifices are made on this tail. The owner always has his instrument in an unusual skin, often the hide of a small wild animal, and he lets an end protrude. That, I believe, is his insignia, his mark of identification, unless it be the small bell he hangs on the paws of the hide and which he knows so well how to shake in order to notify people of his arrival.

778 The Bambara consult these sorcerers to find out the future and to
791 draw their horoscopes or good luck. The fee for a seance is not at all unreasonable; it seldom exceeds the moderate sum of 40 cowrie shells, or one sou.

Concerning the Sirikoun

Every great boli includes an object called sirikoun. There are
778 other sirikoun which are no longer parts of boli, but have become
754 actual boli. The latter are hung at the waist and are always /156/ covered with a red cloth. Almost everyone owns them, although they are most frequently in the hands of the owners and sacrificers of great fetishes. They are usually ends of the tails of cows, horses, wild pigs, etc., and are often sprinkled with blood. They are sought in order to cast a spell or sorcery on an enemy, to make him sick, and even
[151] cause him to die, or again to protect oneself from a spell, sorcery, sickness, or death.

The sirikoun and the talking boli are fetishes belonging to individuals; they have neither festivals nor formal sacrifices, and they are not publically worshipped.

Chapter 8

The First Years in the Life of a Bambara

1. The Sexual Morality of the Bambara

181 Those who have seen the Bambara and have the slightest acquaintance with them will not hesitate to tell you: "They are liars and thieves." They certainly never pass up a chance to take the property of another, and they lie boldly and with such complete calm that not a muscle in their bodies flinches. This has always surprised

843 but is lost after the first months -- something that is inexplicable to her. To avoid this misfortune she covers herself with grigris and talismans; she wears them on her neck, on her hips, down her breasts, on her arms. One in particular I cannot silently pass over; it is the tafo, a narrow leather thong held in the skin of a monkey's hand and knotted sometimes around the wrist and sometimes above the biceps.

842 843 782 778 A sterile woman or one subject to accidents during her pregnancies appeals to the Komo, Kono, or Nama boli fetishes, but more often to the gnena, or djine, fetishes, and above all to the dasiri fetish, the genie protector of the village. Through the intermediary of the priest, the gnena-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, she offers it hens, kola nuts, and dégé, or millet flour mixed with water. She dedicates and consecrates the fruit of her womb to the dasiri and swears an oath to offer a sacrifice worthy of it if she succeeds in carrying her child to full term.

842 843 782 778 825 I should reiterate in passing that the dasiri gnéna is not, as one might suppose, constantly sitting down or astride of a /167/ leafy branch or, if you like, enclosed in a tree trunk with bark as a fitted jacket. It walks around, readily leaves the tree, the spring, or the rock which it uses as dwelling, home, or resting place; it visits its relatives and close friends, it carouses with its companions every time a drinking bout is held in honor of one of them, and when there are no parties, it takes advantage of its freedom. It is afraid of walking with its feet on the ground, so for its romantic excursions in and around the village, it straddles its mount, which is a snake, a lizard, or a donkey, but usually, as we already know, a terrible billy goat. It is this animal, especially, that the sterile woman showers with her attentions; she often goes far into the bush to fetch a handful of tender grass which is its delicacy, and every day measures of millet and maize bran are set aside for it. When she becomes a mother, she overflows with sacrifices and acts of thanksgiving, and her child receives the name of the fetish. He will be djiriba, gnénama, or gnénamaké, as I have already said in the paragraph in which I discussed the dasiri, who is the genie protector of the village and the first of the gnéna.

881 It is after midnight. The circumcised boys are seated in the
796 place of honor where their older brothers sat before, and they furious-
194 ly shake their gourd disks strung on sticks. Leaning on their millet stalks, the regulation sticks, the excised girls in their turn arrive at the public square, singing and shaking their pierced gourds, and the dances begin as at the soli si and continue until morning. Outside, under the sacred trees, the bell of the fetish tinkles and summons the initiates, and the Komo god roars through the mouth of its herald. At a sign from the priest the circumcised boys get up, leave the village, and go under the big trees to swear loyalty and to dedicate themselves, body and soul, to the prince of darkness (1). How can

1. The scene which I describe sometimes takes place the evening before. Sometimes, by order of a sorcerer and for a reason considered serious, the entrance into the sect of a fetish is postponed until later.

this scene be described! The circumcised boys sit under the god's favorite tree, and the crowd of initiates, grouped by villages, gather around the gourds full of d'lo that froths and bubbles. Little fires are lighted and cast a strange light into the night, and a circle of crouching human beings appears and takes shape. The master of the idol (Komo tigi); the sacrificer (mourou kala tigi); the beadle (darotigi), who rings for the sacrifice and gathers the initiates; the fetish's storytellers /griots/ (Komo djeli maou), who sing the praises of the god, fall into catalepsy at the sacrifices and then give out oracles;
● [778 the Komo warada, who wear a coat covered with the feather of guinea
534] hens, hens, egrets, etc., and a long horned mask, and who carry the fetish to the place of sacrifice and blow into an iron tube that ends in two horns /186/ and is at once idol and trumpet, and draw from it frightful "fouin fouin" that freeze you with fear: in short, all the staff of the Komo appear on the scene, and there is a lascivious dance, the dance of the god, the sacred dance. Then there is the

584 sterile? And if he should be one of those sensualists so numerous
593 among us, and, bored after having enjoyed her, should drive her away and reject her?" He trembles and wants to know what the future holds both for him and for her, and goes to consult the diviners.

584 Two and often three diviners are consulted. If they all agree in
593 testifying that the suitor is of good character, that divorce is not to
787 be feared, and that the child will become the mother of healthy, strong, and vigorous children who will perpetuate her people and her blood, he finds joy again. He tells the verdict to both his wife and his daughter, he imparts his decision to the head of the village and the council of elders, and /202/ without any delay, freed as he is from all fear, he notifies the suitor that the doors of his home are open to him.

584 At this announcement the suitor chooses a fat hen from his hen
787 house, takes one or two kola nuts from his store, and again the fourouboloma tigi, the guardian of the wedding gifts, starts on his way, for this time he must find out whether the family boli, and sometimes the shades of its ancestors, are opposed to the proposed union (1).

1. If some occurrence later causes the engagement to be broken, or if there is a marriage followed by divorce, it does not enter his mind that the diviners were mistaken. The whole responsibility falls on the head of an enemy, who through hatred or jealousy has found a way to disrupt everything. It is almost always someone unknown, which is fortunate.

584 The father of the little girl takes down his goatskin, or often the
787 skin of a wild animal, a frightful, dirty foroko, the tabernacle of the
778 family boli; he sprinkles them with the blood of the hen and then spits a piece of chewed kola nut on them. If he does not have family boli -- an unusual situation -- he sacrifices to his ancestors on the doorsill of the entry hut, or b'lon, and on the kârâ, if he owns one.

4: Henry--221 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

584 787 778 A kârâ is an earthern bas-relief inside the b'lon, or entry hut, which very crudely depicts a woman and a man and is used as an altar.

When the sacrifice is accepted -- that is, if the feathered biped has the fortunate idea of not dying with its wings spread and its breast on the ground, and if the pieces of kola nut, cut in two, which are thrown on the boli or the kârâ, fall with the rounded part on the ground and the pulp on top (2) -- there is an unequivocal "yes" on

2. A procedure which is repeated up to three times in case of failure.

the part of the family, and all hearts rejoice. As to the fourouboloma tigi, he delightedly sucks his piece of kola nut, he savors his piece of the hen, and the scene of the sacrifice is far from his memory. Yet he trembled when, crouched before his boli or the kârâ, altar of his ancestors, the father-in-law cut the throat of the victim and threw down the kola nut, saying in a solemn and cavernous voice: "We have consulted the diviners, and they all agree in praising the suitor; if they are to be believed, he is worthy of our daughter. But you, what do you think of this union? If it is to be /203/ happy, if divorce is not to be feared, if it is to be fertile, accept my sacrifice, I pray you. In that case, grant them wealth, long life, many children, and peace. This hen and the kolas are indeed for the sacrifice, and it is a true sacrifice which the suitor offers you through my mediation."

This manner of accepting or rejecting a suitor is most ingenious! Since everything is referred to the decision of the diviners, the boli, and the shades of ancestors, any dispute on the part of a rejected man is impossible, no quarrel arises between the two families, and when a more fortunate suitor obtains the little girl's hand, he need not fear the hate, rancor, or vengeance of his predecessor for he has nothing to do with the latter's misfortune.

4: Henry--228 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

585 Departure of the bride. Exorcism of her hut by the boli of the village. Her entrance into the village. The first night. -- It is night, the hour when families crouch in a circle around the gourds of to, or millet gruel, stuff themselves with food, and noisily suck their fingers. Why is it, then, that this evening the women hurry in such numbers to the public square with gourds on their heads? At every turning of the streets there are people who are cleaning their long flintlocks, and in the b'lon, or entry huts, there is the deafening noise of drums as the skins are stretched and they are tuned. And the cries that fill the village crack your ears and jar your nerves. What is it then? A young woman, a fiancée, who is struggling in the arms of two husky fellows and shrieking -- for appearances, since as soon as she is outside the walls her cries cease and she places on her head the long cloth (a present from her husband) from which she can make herself three loincloths and in very lively fashion follows the women and girls who are carrying her trousseau. The band of young men, with drums, trumpets, and guns, hurries after her, and there are songs of joy and hand clappings, and from time to time the long-drawn-out cry, "kouyo, kouyo," uttered by an old woman, tears the peace and silence of the night. /208/

585 789 778 And while the bride, in short steps, continues her triumphal march, a strange scene takes place in the village where she is going. The chief boli of the village has left its putrid hiding place, and while women, children, and the uninitiated, huddled in their huts, tremble at each roar given forth by its herald, it runs about the alleys in the hands of its initiates (1). This is not all; it goes into the husband's

1. Ou tara djira à tjéma k'a d'a ma: "They have gone to show her to her husband in order to give her to him." The real expression is as follows: A wéléla k'a se-n-don, A se-n-donna: "Her husband has summoned her in order to sleep with her. She has slept with her husband." The answer is: Fourou kera: "They got married."

585 court and enters the hut of the bride. At that instant the boli déou,
789 sons of the boli, sing the sacred hymn and abandon themselves to
778 their dances, and the god itself lies on the white cloth spread on the bed, on the mat where the poor girl soon will rest. Like every rite of this kind, this ceremony is called kéné salo, "to exorcise the place (2)," and its purpose is to drive out the harmful spirits who

2. Kéné, "surface," "plane," "floor," "court"; salo, "stroke gently with the hand"; this term denotes a movement of the hands that the sorcerers use when they are treating an invalid, "to make /ritual/ gestures."

might have evil intentions against the woman and her husband. For the husband it is also a means of publicly bearing witness to his faith in the boli and his love and his attachment for it, in short, a means of obtaining its favor and attaining a happy and fertile marriage.

585 The young woman and her retinue continue to walk very slowly along the winding paths, and in the distance, here and there, a gunshot, a clapping of hands, and the famous cry of "kouyo kouyo" can be heard; the cry comes near and again draws away, depending on the bends of the path, only to draw near again with a stronger burst. Finally they arrive at the edge of the fields, 200 to 300 meters at most from the village. The young men run to place themselves at the head of the procession, the bearers of the trousseau pass to the rear, the drums roll, and the horns of the band roar loudly, for this is the dance. But what a dance! The women, bent double, move
535 their torsos back and forth in a manner which might best be compared with that of a worm that draws back and slowly stretches out; they glide over the ground without lifting /209/ their feet, leaving on the sand behind them a long trail as if a boa had passed by. With discouraging slowness, they go like this to the gate of the village, taking an hour, and often two, to cover these few hundred meters.

Covered with sweat and white with dust, the procession moves along the walls; here it is at the gate, firing guns, clapping hands,

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845
847

causing her own child to die. A mother who has lost her child may adopt an orphan and give it her breast.

766 crowd /226/ always withdraws, and the blacksmith remains alone
845 with his assistant. When the work is done, they wash their hands on the grave itself, and the operator makes the customary prayer: "Whether the wind comes from the east or the west, from the north or the south, etc.," (see above, p. 244).

5. Sacrifices to Fetishes on the Occasion of a Death

782 Although at the time of death there is no sacrifice to the soul
764 of the deceased nor to the shades of ancestors, blood flows neverthe-
778 less. It even flows in torrents for the Bambara are not satisfied with reddening the family boli; they stain with blood all the boli fetishes they believe to be guilty. Nor do initiates of the sects forget their deceased brothers, and for a friend who was initiated the same day as they themselves, they cannot refuse the boli a hen and a kola nut. If the deceased is the master of a fetish, its priest, or an influential person on its staff, all the initiates comply, and the sacrifice becomes general. The initiates do more; in the evening they take the god out of its temple, and all night long they mingle their wild animal shouts with the blasts of sacred horns and trumpets blown by heralds. The latter very often wear hideous horned masks on their heads and are dressed in cloaks of feathers.

761 Eighty times out of a hundred, death is attributed to a powerful
782 boli which is taking vengeance, punishing or rewarding, and in the
764 environs of Ségou the Komo, Nia, Kono, Nama, and Douga are the
778 ones who have the most deaths to their credit. When the murdering boli is known, the entire village is notified; the trousers, blouse and bed cover of the deceased, or the tafé (1) if it is a woman, are hung

1. Tafé: a rectangular piece of cloth which women wind around their bodies to cover themselves.

761 on the branches of the sacred tree under which the fetish dwells and
782 at the door of its temple, and the members of its staff know how to
764 extol their god. Under these conditions they are without pity; they
778 bleed the bereaved family white, so that the tax demanded by our circle officers (2) is nothing compared to the tax that they have to

[651]

2. The head tax is 3. 50 francs per person and 5 francs for the servants of Europeans. Here France is surely not a "tyrant, " but a tender mother.

pay. /227/

782 What do they not have to give for a sacrifice to the Komo, for
764 example? The whole house is turned upside down to find goats, dogs,
[824] kola nuts, roosters, and hens, gnâma-n-kou (Amormum melegueta), and djalakouma (a plant whose name I do not know). The family needs all this, cost what it may, and if they have to buy it all they have to pay double or triple the value of the objects, for others make profits from their necessity. First a dog or a goat is sacrificed to appease the fetish and pay respects to it. Then to find out whether it is satisfied and its hatred assuaged, two red roosters and two hens with golden necks bite the dust. A bara (1) (gourd) full of gnâma-n-

[415 824]

1. This bara (a large pumpkin /courge/ with a small opening at the top) can hold from 18 to 20 liters of liquid. The true gourd is half of a pumpkin.

kou fruit and another full of djalakouma are offered. One portion of these fruits is used for holy water (2); the other is sold for the benefit

782 764 824

2. The holy water of the Komo is made of roots and leaves of the djalakouma and the fruit of the

764 which is nothing less than disguised slavery. In the presence of a
782 European the Negroes like to complain that he cannot meet their taxes, but they should not be listened to too closely -- 99 times out of 100 they are lying! Let us not make war against the military or civil official responsible for levying the tax, which is not at all exorbitant; let us think before all about the boli and their staffs, a band of persons without principles or law, human vultures with greedy fingers who attack the weak, the widows and orphans, terrify them with their threats of death. They do not leave these people in peace until they have taken everything: hens, goats, dogs, cowrie shells, sorghum, and often freedom.

6. Respects Paid to Initiates of the Koré, or Koté

794 The initiates of a fetish are never indifferent to the death of a
766 brother, and they hasten to find a hen and a kola nut with which to prove their attachment to the deceased and to assuage the wrath of the god. The sect of koré does things in a grand, even in a ceremonious, manner, if there is any ceremony in those nocturnal orgies where d'lo, or millet beer, is drunk to /229/ the point of senselessness, and where lascivious and obscene dances are danced.

When a young man who is koré dé (son of koré, initiate of the
[778] sect) dies, relatives and friends redden with blood the sacred tree and the kara, a perforated board painted red and white, which is the genie's emblem. Although there is general mourning in the village, tears are dried when evening comes, and for three nights there is nameless
[785] bedlam and endless shouting in the kore tou (the sacred grove) as initiates flagellate themselves, burn their backs with torches, tear their bodies with thorns, abandon themselves to their barbaric dances,
[534] and lose themselves in lewd gestures in front of the dénouba (drums measuring from one to one and a half meters) and the kingé (a triangle, an iron tube, which is hung from the thumb of the left hand and which is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger).

For the old people who are granted not a tear nor a regret but for whom there are dances and songs, fellow initiates come in large numbers, and during the night preceding the burial, they make a

4: Henry--263 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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The sacrifice to the dead is most often made on the doorsill of the entry hut, and a splash of blood is spread on the wall on each side of the door, about a meter and half from the ground. Many families also have an altar for sacrificing to the dead in their main b'lon; it is the kârâ, an earthen bas-relief depicting a man and a woman. It is all crudely made and has no human qualities about it. Nevertheless, one can guess what the Negroes wanted to depict, for although the woman is without mouth, ears, nose, or eyes, just like her mate, she is always adorned with two fine breasts.

4: Henry--267 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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A fetish in the bush; the dwelling of a djiné genie (near Bamako).

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• 778
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4: Henry--271 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

Left: Souba (monkey), society of the Koré. Above: Denouba (the big drum) and kinge (a triangle), society of the Koré. Center: Head korodouga and his herald, society of the Koré. Right: Souroukou (hyena), society of the Koré.

4: Henry--274 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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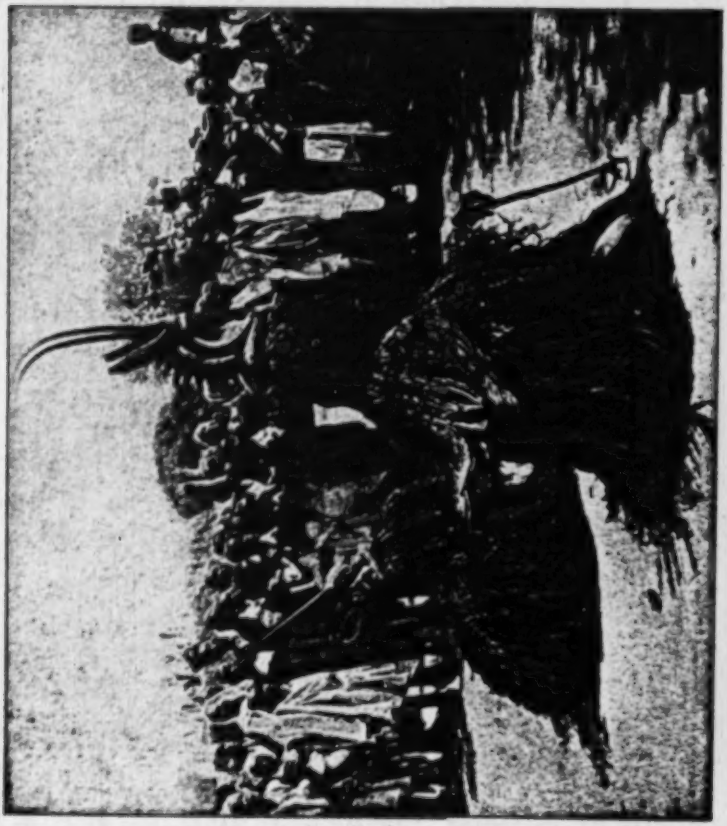

Sacred dance in honor of the Tji wara fetish, the genie of work.

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Sacred dance of the mourou kalatigi (sacrificer) after a sacrifice accepted by the boli M'bie Djougou at Talakala.

Mask of the boli fetish Komo.

Temple of Nia, a powerful boli.

Above: Pillar of the Magnan, a powerful boli fetish.

4: Henry--276 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Zanké and the boli fetish, Kono.

Temple of the Kono fetish.

4: Henry--277 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910
FA8 Bambara FA8

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The Nama fetish.

4: Henry--278 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910
FA8 Bambara FA8

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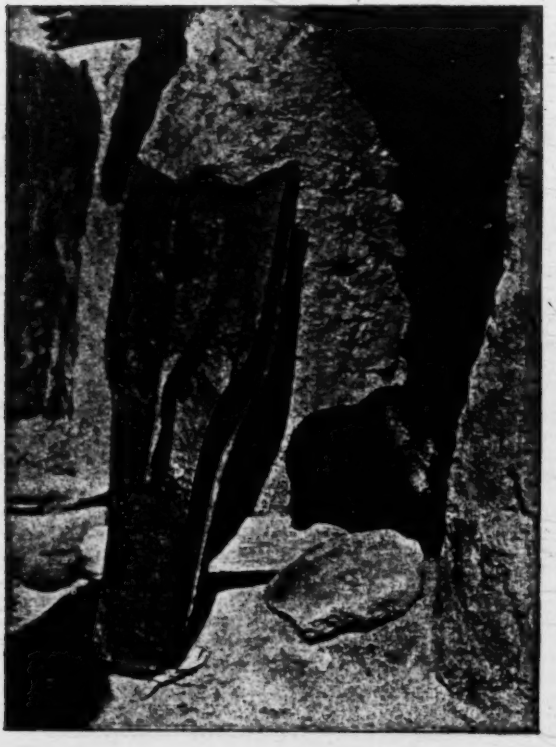

A boli fetish in the shape of a hippopotamus, with the mask worn during the sacred dance.